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Associate Editor : Tom McNamara

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Let's Make Babies, Darling

by Daniel Curzon

"Way to go, Slugger!" his big brother Rudy said, patting Lester's rear end. "You did it, you fox!" jolly cousin Carl teased, his face all flushed. "Welcome to the union, kid!" his paunchy Uncle Ray shouted through a thicket of family arms and voices. "You're such a lucky fellow to be getting our Edith!" Aunt Ida was telling him, and he nodded giddily, waving his arm above the din of bodies as his fiancée, who waved back, her broad-brimmed hat almost knocked off her magical, auburn hair by one of her third cousins who had started to hug and kiss her.

Lester couldn't take his eyes away from Edith: such a shiny face she had, delicate-boned, covered with firm-yet-pillowy skin; he loved stroking her neck. And now he'd be able to do it anytime he wanted! He touched his own outsized jaw and smiled. Edith had told him that she loved his jaw, didn't think it was lantern at all; it was manly, she had said. They were a perfect couple. Everybody said it. She was five-foot-six and he was five-foot-ten; she was twenty-two and he was twenty-four; she was a virgin and he had

had sex thirteen times.

"I propose a toast!" Lester's paunchy Uncle Ray was calling over the other festive sounds. "Hey, everybody, a toast to Edith and Lester!" The crowd of rosy relatives buzzed, and everybody grabbed a glass. Corks popped and the champagne sloshed merrily into a couple of dozen outstretched glasses. Jolly cousin Carl hurried up so fast to Edith's father, who was pouring, that he slid on a wet patch on the banquet room floor and jostled a grandmother, who was slightly tipsy anyhow.

Lester and Edith, their hands joined solemnly now, stood in the middle of the group, blushing and grinning, very humid. His new suit and her party dress were damp — and Edith really had to go to the bathroom very badly. "Give her a kiss, give her a kiss!" tipsy Grandma Tweadle insisted, clucking, and Lester leaned over and smacked Edith on an over-heated cheek.

"Bet Lester's gonna do a whole lot more than kiss her!" Grandma Merzey twinkled, making everybody laugh. Edith put her eyes down. Grandma Merzey was

always saying spicy things like that.

"He ain't no son of mine if he can't!" Lester's father shouted proudly, throwing away an empty champagne bottle, which rolled across the floor and clanged against several other empties near the streamer-covered bandstand. The accordion player giggled and, as a joke, made his accordion ripple.

"Come on now, Lester, give your honey a big smacker and I'll take it!" Lester's big brother Rudy directed.

Lester complied of course, bending Edith over backwards, looking down into her sweet, orange-colored little mouth, at the powdered dimples. He pushed his face on top of hers, and everybody applauded, breaking into a rhythm, glasses clinking against each other, and Lester's big brother Rudy pulled out the paper tab on the Polaroid so they'd all be able to see the photograph in a few seconds.

The party bubbled on till all hours, and among other festivities, Lester stomped three times on a piece of engagement cake with his left heel, and Edith caught the ceremonial thimble in her lap four times.

* * * * *

It was raining spitty gobs on Dwight and Bart as they went up the steps of the courthouse for their marriage license. They decided not to hold hands as they waited in the long line of applicants.

The waiting room of the Marriage Bureau was lighted like an operating room, the temperature too high, though

with much nuzzling among the other applicants. Dwight watched Bart fiddling with his rather flat nose, even playing with his eyelash, a nervous gesture, and Dwight forced his large hands to stay in his lap, under control. He stroked his own lean thighs, then sat back with his arms ribboned across his chest. His and Bart's eyes met for an instant. They both grinned.

The procedure for marriage licenses had been honed, so they did not have to wait long. The man and woman turning from the window gave them a funny stare but said nothing when the two young black-haired men stepped up to the window. "We'd like . . ." Dwight said, pointing at the applications.

The official's mouth parted. "It's not April Fool's." He was a squat pyramid of a man, rather more of him at the bottom than nature had intended. He looked around Dwight, who was tall, to see if there were any more "real" applicants. "Would you boys mind moving out of the way," he said politely. "You fellas had your little college joke now."

"We're not joking," Bart answered, putting his arm around Dwight's shoulder. "We'd like to get married."

"What are you, some kind of perverts?" the squat pyramid asked agreeably, twitching his bushy bar of a moustache.

Bart looked up at Dwight. "I suppose some people might say that."

Six more couples had since come into the office and were lining up behind them at the window, restless.

"We've each had a blood test," Dwight

offered, taking the slips of paper out of his polo shirt pocket.

The squat pyramid spat, "This isn't funny any longer."

"It's for tax purposes," Bart explained.

"You're not getting married in my office!" The squat pyramid's voice got a bit too high, he realized, and he coughed gruffly.

"We're next," said one of the men in the line behind them, which was getting even longer, spilling out into the corridor.

"But we're just trying—"

"Yuk!" said the man immediately in back of them.

"Which one's the bride?" a man who fancied himself a comedian enquired.

"How about a shot of hormones!" his bride-to-be added.

Dwight felt his head grow dizzy, and touched one of his sideburns, but didn't move. "If we could simply get —"

The official pushed a button on the floor, and a pair of security guards came in from the next room and arrested Dwight and Bart. Then the official shook his head, inked his stamping pad, and put APPLICATION REJECTED on their foreheads. They were escorted outside, and the office got down to business again.

* * * * *

Edith made such a lovely bride, frilly and luscious, Lester thought he could eat her up. He and his new wife stood beside the swimming pool of the country club her father had rented, while the guests came

up to them, to spit the traditional brown sugar and syrup on the bride and groom's lips and to dangle a present around Lester's or Edith's neck.

"Just a minute!" Edith's father called, and the guests pivoted in surprise. He held two green garden hoses and twisted the nozzles deftly, aiming the thick streams — milk from one and honey from the other — through the air so that they fell from above on Edith and Lester and their many packages — a special no-stain milk and honey that washed right off. Lester squeezed his bride, the liquids dripping from his forehead down the bridge of his nose. Some honey got on Edith's nostril and he licked it off, and the guests clapped. "It's been such a lovely wedding," Aunt Ida thought.

* * * * *

The two security guards at the entrance to the Marriage Bureau were holding firm, shaking their flaming faggot torches angrily. Nevertheless Bart made a rush up the steps, but was deterred by the fire, his summer jacket scorched on one sleeve. Dwight thought they should try a diversionary tactic, but wasn't very clear on the details.

The burlier of the two guards swung his faggot torch. "You'll not be bringing the fall of the Roman Empire in here, me lads!"

"Go back under your rock!" the other one (who was purple-faced) said.

"It's still a free country!" Bart yelled back optimistically, ripping off

the scorched edge of his sleeve.

"All right, we've had enough!" the burlier guard growled, cuddly as an old teddy bear. He signalled to his partner, who went inside the building, coming back at once with a catapult on wheels and a pail of smoking coals. "We warned you!" the policeman said, taking a shovelful of brimstone and ashes from the pail and arranging it on the flat metal spoon of the catapult, some cinders falling off in his hurry. He flipped a lever on the side, and the brimstone and ashes whizzed neatly through the air and then broke into sizzling pieces, like shrapnel, singeing Bart and Dwight's ankles. They hopped about, not at all dignified. The second shovelful set Bart's bell-bottomed cuffs on fire.

"Your mother sucks combat boots!" the unburly, purple guard called, unleashing another shovelful, more ashes than brimstone this time, and Bart and Dwight skipped out of sight, trying to snuff their burning trousers.

* * * * *

The chauffeur was waiting for Edith and Lester to drive them away in the limousine. Since Edith's father couldn't find his wedding present, they had to wait, quite awkwardly, because all the confetti was thrown by then. They had showered, washing the milk and honey, brown sugar and syrup off, had piled their gifts in the carry-all trailer attached to the limousine, and were kissing and being kissed by everybody in sight for the second or third time.

Finally Edith's chunky father rushed out onto the gravel driveway to the limousine and thrust the envelope into Lester's hand. "Take good care of my little gal, you hear," he panted, his eyes fighting off tears. "And when you two get back from your honeymoon, just remember, Lester, that job with me is waiting if you want it."

"What did you give us, Daddy?" Edith wondered, unsealing the envelope. Her eyes grew as big as spotlights. "It's a house, Lester!" She showed him the deed. "A whole house - all paid for. Oh Daddy!" She threw her confettied arms around her father's stumpy neck. "How can we ever thank you!"

"Just make me a granddaddy," her father chuckled. Everybody burbled.

* * * * *

Bart and Dwight, the burned parts of their trousers repaired, came back to the Marriage Bureau, persistent, suspicious when they saw that the two guards were not around. A busload of couples to be married (Future Family Tours) pulled up and got out with their tour guide and trooped inside. After a hurried conference, Bart and Dwight sneaked into the rear of the tour group, holding hands like the others, hoping nobody would look too closely.

They got as far as the license office before a squadron of guards in white uniforms emerged from the men's room where they'd been hiding. "You're under arrest!" one of them said. "Section 592-Z

of the Code." He waited while the other guards locked handcuffs on the intruders.

"You can't do this to us!" Dwight protested.

"How long you had these persecution delusions?"

"We haven't done anything wrong."

"You're entitled to know that everything you say will be taken down and used as evidence against you. Any questions?"

"What're you going to do to us?"

"Sign here."

"We want a lawyer," Bart said.

"Oh, queer for lawyers, eh?"

* * * * *

The limousine arrived at Valentine Lodge and let Edith and Lester off at the top of the heart-shaped road. Two blind bellboys dressed like Cupid, complete with bolden bows and curls and decorous strips of gold lamé across their groins, came out for the luggage and led them into the Lodge. The manager, a balding man with enthusiasm, greeted them. "Mr. and Mrs. Tweadle? Of course!" He turned the valentine-shaped registry book around on its lazy-susan for them to sign in.

"My, it's so lovely!" Edith complimented, taking in the main lounge, done all in ripe-raspberry plush. Here and there couples were necking and tickling each other in the love-seats placed everywhere. The manager snapped his fingers. "The Moonglow Suite," he said, and one of the blind bellboy Cupids picked up their bags, after a little assistance from Lester, and showed them up to their rooms, all

three pressed together in the small elevator.

The roly-poly little fellow opened their door for them, and Edith swept inside. "Oh, come see it, Lester!" He followed her in.

The wallpaper was entwined with raspberry hearts every few inches, culminating in one huge one that formed the light fixture over the bed. Excited, Edith ran to the bed and leapt on it. "Oh, feel it, Lester!"

He felt it. "It's shaped like a valentine!"

"It's so darling, darling!" She bounced gently up and down, then threw out her arms, falling backwards. Cupid smiled before he found his way to a wall switch and doused the lights. The room got pitch dark, then gradually the light fixture began to glow like a pink, fluorescent moon.

"Our Moonglow Love Lamp," Cupid said.

"Ahhhh!" Lester and Edith crooned together.

The bellboy next showed them the other room, a dining area where they could take all their meals if they wished, and not have to go out for a month. He tapped on the refrigerator and told Lester to open it. It was stocked with food.

"See anything else?" the bellboy asked, looking coy.

Lester put his head in and noticed that a chart had been fastened next to the butter compartment. It diagrammed the Twelve Positions of Love.

"We think of everything," the little

fellow explained. "Will that be all?"

"Yes, I suppose," Lester said, closing the refrigerator, searching in his wallet for a tip.

But the bellboy heard him and held up his hand. "No tips, sir. At times like this, we here at Valentine Lodge don't want you to worry about the little things of life."

"How nice."

"However, if you'd like to contribute something for the staff — say a dollar every time you and the Mrs. —" He twirled a pudgy finger, saying no more, gesturing toward a transparent glass valentine on the nightstand next to the bed. "The maid will empty it every morning, you see." He winked, bowed, straightened his quiver, and departed.

Lester sat on the bed and reached for Edith, who was kittenish. "Oh now, darling, we haven't seen the rest of the place yet," she protested, hopping up. She threw open a door. "Honey, look!" He came up beside her and, together, they surveyed the bathroom. It was finished in glossy black tile. They went in — together of course.

The center of the room was taken up by a twin-hearted sunken bathtub in peppermint stripes, with three towels on a rack nearby, marked HIS, HERS, and a great big one marked THEIRS.

"Look, lovey!" Lester said, lifting the fluffy seat of the valentine-shaped toilet bowl. But Edith modestly turned away, and he put the seat back down.

In the medicine cabinet over the HIS and HERS sinks were No-Doz tablets and

a supply of French ticklers. Lester opened a packet, noting the ultra-thin rubber garment with its valentine-shaped protrusions on the end. "Look, hon!" he said, holding it out to Edith. She returned a pinched, unconvinced, tiny smile, so he crumpled the French tickler up, but it wouldn't fit back into the packet. He left it near the No-Doz tablets.

Lester began twisting the lid off a tube of something called Love Lotion. He sniffed. It smelled vaguely of sperm, with mint added. He dabbed some onto his fingers and rubbed them together. They slid off each other so fast he almost sprained his thumb. As he tried picking up the tube, it slid out of his slippery fingers and fell into the twin bathtubs. When he was kneeling down to reach for it, holding onto the porcelain, the Love Lotion slipped and Lester lost his grip and tumbled into the bathtub and bumped his forehead on the faucets.

"Darling, are you hurt?" Edith got down, extending her hand, but the Love Lotion had removed all friction and she stumbled back against the wall and sat down hard on the valentine-shaped toilet bowl. With his dry hand, Lester gamely clambered out of the tub and hugged her.

"You all right, lamby-legs!" he asked.

"I hurt my headums because of your nasty-nasty," she sobbed, snuggling up to his big chest as he knelt beside her.

"Bad, bad toilet!" Lester comforted, hitting the offending fixture with his fist. "Come to Daddy-bums," he soothed, picking her up in his arms and carrying her out to the bed. When both their weights

descended on the bed the overhead Moon-glow Love Lamp went on automatically, compliments of the management. After a moment, a tray appeared out of the head-board holding two flagons of wine -- with a hint of Spanish fly, low-cal of course. LOVE POTION was embossed in silver on the rims. Lush music began playing from a combination hi-fi and douche bowl built right into the far side of the bed.

"Lester, I feel so romantic with you," Edith purred. And the valentine-shaped bed squeaked.

* * * * *

In the hospital laboratory Bart and Dwight were fastened down on the twin stretchers near each other in front of a movie screen. Doctor, a tidy man in a seersucker suit, and Nurse, radiant in a super-white uniform, were getting the vomit-inducing injections ready. "Now this will hurt a lot," she said. Doctor finished a hurried baloney sandwich, and washed his hands for the fourteenth time before securing the straps around Bart's and Dwight's arms and legs. Nurse jabbed the hypodermic needles at the same time -- deftly.

Bart and Dwight screamed and struggled.

"Comfy?" Doctor enquired. "Slide One, Nurse."

She fitted the picture into the projector and flashed it on the wall. It was a naked man. "Now what you think of that?" Doctor asked.

Bart fought the knot of nausea forming

in the rear of his throat, and Dwight closed his eyes.

"Slide Two," Doctor ordered. It was a naked man with two penises. "And what about this one?" Doctor smoothed down his already perfectly combed hair.

Dwight lost the battle and threw up copiously, soiling the front of his polo shirt.

"That's more like it," Doctor said, pleased. "Slide Three."

Nurse complied, showing another naked man, but this time there was a naked race horse in the background. "What's this, Doctor?" she asked, a bit confused.

"We might as well stop them from gambling while we're at it, don't you think? It doesn't cost any more." Doctor looked over to see if Bart and Dwight were vomiting properly. At last Bart's treatment was taking effect, and a large helping of mashed potatoes and cherrypie dribbled out of his mouth and formed a puddle in the hollow of his neck.

"They're making progress!" Doctor enthused.

"Would you two boys care for popcorn?" Nurse wondered, slipping Slide Four into the projector.

* * * * *

On their third day at Valentine Lodge, Lester and his bride were walking in the Garden of Remembered Bliss among the hedgerows and marigold beds. He plucked a bit of greenery from a hedge and offered it to Edith. "Thank you, love," she said.

"I'll press it in my album." She leaned across and bussed his cheek. "I've never been happier." Her violet eyes luminous, she looked dewier than the early morning grass around them. "Don't forget we have that appointment at nine."

"What's that?"

"Oh, Lester, you know! The bronzed cast."

"Oh, yeah."

"We'd better hurry." She tugged him along after her.

But they had to wait half an hour because the Resident Artist was so busy, though he was exceedingly pleasant once he got to them. "Sorry you folks had to wait," he apologized. He had a pointed gray beard and was dressed in an artist's smock, with paint all over his hands from one of the Last Suppers on black velvet that he had been finishing up. "Now, have you kids decided what you'd like?"

Edith sat down beside his desk and took a list from her purse, while Lester pulled up a chair for himself. "Yes," she said, "we thought the Bronzed Kiss would be nice."

"Excellent choice!" The Resident Artist beamed. "Lots of our couples select that one. The twelve-by-twelve jumbo size makes a particularly interesting conversation piece." Suddenly he reached into a drawer. "Have you two thought of getting a dozen life-size Kisses — for friends, relatives?" He held up a sample of two pairs of bronzed lips, kissing, in his pinched fintertips. "We call this our Oscu-Elation model. They make perfect graduation gifts, or pins for loved ones."

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Edith looked uncertainly at Lester. "What d'ya think, honey?"

"Here, feel the quality," the Resident Artist said, handing the lips to Lester.

"I'm sorry," Lester excused himself, not taking them, since the Love Lotion from the medicine chest had still not washed off his fingers. He couldn't even light his own cigarettes; Edith had to do it for him. "You decide, honeykins," he said.

"Well then," she said, "we'll take two twelve-by-twelve jumbo Bronzed First Kiss and —" Edith halted, mildly embarrassed.

"Yes?"

"And one plaster cast of the two of us in bed." She looked down demurely.

The Resident Artist moved a wet paint brush off his desk. "Goody for you! Which of the Twelve Positions of Love have you selected for your very own personal sculpture?"

"We think . . . Number Seven," she answered, still not looking up.

"Perfect! Number Seven is you two all the way!" The radiant Resident Artist made a check on the order form. "Now, when would you two lovebirds like our expert molders to visit your suite and get your very own body-prints? Is tonight too soon?"

"That should be fine," Lester decided, after a nod from Edith.

"I can see that you two kids have made a joint decision — I'm so glad. We here at the Lodge like to see couples making decisions together." He looked at the order form. "We've been using this new

porous, non-stick plaster of late, and it's no mess whatsoever. Our expert men whip right in — shall we say ten P.M.? — mix the plaster in a few minutes — you can pick your favorite color from our color-coordination chart." He turned and indicated a chart of thirty-five hues, from elopement salmon to conugal blue.

"We think nuptial nutmeg is nice, don't we?" Edith said.

"Perfect selection!" He checked off another square on the form. "Now, just one more thing — do you think you two can hold Position Seven for twenty minutes, umm?" The artist snickered wickedly. "Of course you can! You see, this new non-stick plaster takes a bit longer to set than the old kind. But we know you'd want a cast that will last a lifetime, wouldn't you!" He ticked off another square. "Now, how many would you like — a half-dozen? They make great shower gifts, birthday gifts, birdbaths if you have a back yard." He waited expectantly.

"No, we think just one. For us," Edith answered quietly but firmly.

"Of course, of course, we understand. We all like to have that one special thing for our very own, don't we?" He wiggled his head at them, making a final check on the order form. "So then, Position Seven it'll be!"

* * * * *

Just as Slide Eighteen was flashing onto the screen, Dwight's stretcher straps started to come loose, and he managed

to work an arm free. Doctor and Nurse were so occupied getting a new box of slides ready they didn't notice. Unexpectedly, the vomit had made the straps expand, and in no time at all Dwight had unbuckled the bonds on his chest and legs and was freeing Bart, who sat up, shaking his jacket, spilling rivulets of tomato soup and cheese sandwich down onto his lap.

"Now we won't get cured if we won't stay where Doctor puts us, will we!" Nurse reprimanded.

"This is where we came in!" Bart said, kicking the slide projector and needles onto the floor, losing his balance because there was some vomit on the bottom of his shoes.

"You stay right on that stretcher!" Doctor commanded sternly.

"Shove your stretcher!" Dwight replied, rushing to the door of the laboratory.

Doctor put his hands on his hips, exasperated. "You're never going to get well if you won't let us make you sick!"

"We're sending your names to Blue Cross anyway!" Nurse shouted at them as they raced out of the room.

The hallway was deserted, and they ran toward an exit at the far end. They passed a maternity ward, popped in, grabbed a handful of diapers each, daubing their soiled clothes, and hurried on. Soon, though, they heard Doctor and Nurse coming out of the laboratory, raising the alarm that two patients had escaped. Bells started to ring like thousands of infuriated ambulances.

Quickly Bart and Dwight reached the

glass doors of the exit, stumbling down the outside stairs. Behind them a crowd of orderlies was massing in the hallways, not clear of their orders.

"Hey! There's a garbage truck!" Dwight shouted.

"Let's hijack it!" Bart agreed. They pushed aside the two astonished garbage collectors and leapt into the cab. Bart revved the engine, backed up in a wide arc, and zoomed the truck through the refuse cans, the hospital gates, trailing paper and tin cans and Kotexes galore.

* * * * *

Leaving the Resident Artist, Lester and Edith went shopping in the Honey-mooners' International Discount House, shaped just like a real house. Up in the Afro-Easy-Attic they ordered an Easy-Lay mattress and would have taken the wrought-iron bassinet that Edith liked, even if it was a bit premature, if Lester's hand hadn't slipped from the Love Lotion, causing him to drop the iron bassinet on his foot. Edith's first impulse was to take him back to their Moonglow Suite. But Lester's eyes were a bit weak from all the subdued lighting, he said, and he thought they ought to get some sun.

So they rented one of the valentine-shaped wheelchairs, used mainly by elderly honeymooners, and Edith pushed him around the grounds, along Primrose Path, even over the Dales of Dalliance. They went for such a long stroll, they came to the very edge of Valentine Lodge's grounds, where they saw a wire fence and

went up next to it, Lester standing up beside the wheelchair. They stared at the straggling vegetation on the other side. A neon sign in purple letters saying NO TRESPASSING, THIS MEANS YOU flashed threateningly.

"Who'd want to trespass in that ugly place anyhow!" Edith said huffily.

"Yeah, who . . . ?" Lester wondered.

* * * * *

Bart and Dwight's get-away garbage truck careened around a corner, almost overturning -- a police car was already close on their tail. As they went over a bump in the street intended to slow down traffic, Bart bounced up and banged his head on the roof. And he was still somewhat cock-eyed when they came to an intersection and took a left turn and started up the wrong way of a one-way alley.

"Bart, are you okay?" Dwight asked, shaking his fiancé's shoulder.

The one-way alley led to an entrance ramp of a freeway, and the garbage truck plummeted down, flowing into the heavy afternoon traffic. Committed to stopping crime, the police car followed after. Instantly the policeman who was not driving pulled a safety switch to activate the machine guns mounted under the headlights. The policeman jiggled his finger on the power-trigger and a barrage of bullets rat-tat-tatted out. There were, however, a few kinks in the device that stabilized the machine guns, so the bullets missed the tires of the fleeing garbage

truck and ricocheted off the bumper and penetrated the neck of a citizen illegally parked on the Emergency Strip, thus saving the police car from having to stop to issue him a ticket. The policeman pulled the trigger again. Again the machine gun bullets missed Bart and Dwight's truck, but they did succeed in entering a Volkswagen on the other side of the freeway, killing the seventy-nine-year-old spinster driveress, who had just come from a clinic where she'd been told she had only six months to live. So the bullets (paid for out of city funds) did not go to waste.

"We'll never outrun them on this crowded freeway," Bart said, his head clearing.

"If they catch us, it'll be more than vomit next time?"

"Let's take a chance!" Bart swerved rapidly, cutting off a housetrailer, and spurted up the exit ramp, illegal though it was. But the traffic failed to close as fast as they had hoped, and the police car swerved too, cutting off a funeral procession. The hearse skidded, killing the widow, a Pakistani immigrant, whose conservative relatives were disgusted with her anyway because she'd refused to join her husband on the funeral pyre.

"We've got to lose them!" Dwight yelled, looking out the rear window.

"We'll head for the sticks!" Bart checked the fuel tank, stiffened his arms, and aimed the vehicle toward an empty field at the end of the street. They began bumping over ruts and holes, the axles shrieking.

* * * * *

Lester went up closer to the fence. "Hey, there's a hole in it." He reached between the thistles and uncovered the opening. "Why don't we crawl through?"

Edith was aghast. "But it says No Trespassing."

"Oh, they just say that so you won't go in."

Edith squinched up her eyes. "I'll get my new dress dirty!"

"Come on, it's our honeymoon. Let's explore."

"Can you walk?"

"I'm as good as new." He flexed his leg muscles to show her that he wasn't a sissy.

"The management might not want us going through there." Edith frowned. "Besides, it's nasty and weedy!" Her pug nose got all wrinkled with disgust.

"We won't go far," Lester promised, pushing the thistles flat so that he could crawl through more easily.

* * * * *

One of the machine gun bullets finally hit the garbage truck. "I'm bleeding," Dwight said, rubbing the blood from his calf on the remnants of vomit on his chest.

"It's our last chance," Bart said, turning the truck to the side, streaking over a heap of discarded beer bottles, retread tires, galoshes, and jelly jars surrounded by hobo flies.

They came to a fairly flat stretch and gained a little time on the police car.

"Who's that?" Bart called out, pointing at the young couple wandering around the woods, apparently lost. He slowed the truck. "We can take them hostage, what do you say?"

"Oh, hubbykins, I'm so tired!" Edith was saying.

The garbage truck stopped. "You're our hostages!" Dwight said harshly, stripping off his polo shirt and brandishing the blood and vomit, his only weapon.

Terrified and thrilled, Edith was half into the truck when the police car appeared. Dwight dropped his shirt and pulled her into the cab. Hobbling, Lester put out his hand for his bride, but the Love Lotion made it glide right off her wrist. "They're raping my wife!" he pleaded with the police car, gesturing at the garbage truck speeding away.

Angry now, the policeman in the passenger seat took out his shoulder bazooka and put in a shell, aiming it at the vanishing garbage truck. He realized that hurting the girl was a chance he'd just have to take! Leaning far out of the side window, he let the shell fly. It whistled in a splendid rainbow arch above the tallest bushes and exploded directly on the fleeing truck. Which was blasted to smithereens. Fortunately Edith's part of the front seat was blown free, and she sailed — uninjured, happily — through the June air, landing on a pile of abandoned burlap sacks, where Lester rescued her. They hugged and hugged.

* * * * *

After convincing the two policemen
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that they had not been accomplices of the escaped sodomites (now fragmented hither and yon), Edith and Lester made their way back toward Valentine Lodge. But the way was rough. After a few minutes, they got tangled in some spongy vines and stumbled over half-submerged boulders and keep sinking in oases of rotting, slushy, overripe fruit. Eventually they came to a broad waste area. They saw another neon sign flashing NO TRESPASSING.

"Let's go back," Edith said, uncomfortable.

Lester stopped too. "Come on; the Lodge is probably on the other side."

"We didn't cross a waste!" She scowled.

"It may be a different way," Lester coaxed.

They stepped into the dust.

As they walked on, they saw that the land was as blitzed as a battlefield. Suddenly a delicious odor came from somewhere. Edith sniffed and grew all misty, and Lester, to his surprise, felt like springing a somersault. A purple spider scurried out of an empty tin can and crept away under some junk lying on the ashy earth.

The sun grew potent, impaling their skin, reddening it. Yet, strangely, neither wanted to turn back now. Abruptly Edith recoiled from an object in a shallow depression in the ground. "What's that?"

Lester scrutinized it. "I can't tell," he answered slowly.

Edith kicked at it, swallowing hard. It looked like a tiny human skeleton, broken

in several places.

She ran further on, until Lester caught up with her. They embraced, sniffing, then stopped. In the distance they could hear murmurs, perhaps moans. Again they clasped each other; their grips made white circles.

"I don't want to," Edith implored. Her voice had a langorous quality, almost seductive. "Take me . . . Take me . . ."

Before Lester could reply, the two blind bellboys dressed like Cupid, now swinging incense burners, appeared on a ridge a few yards away. They beckoned, then came closer. Both of them, Edith noticed had erections. She hid her eyes. Their gold lamé loincloths had fallen to their knees and their penises had filth on them. The protruding, firm, red things were grimy with filth.

Of course they followed the bellboys up the slope to the top of the ridge, fighting the voluptuous sand that washed about their legs.

They reached the top, and Lester and Edith saw that they were standing on the parched rim of a dead volcano.

Down below them was a hollow space, several miles in every direction. But it was not empty, for couples were spread over the yellow sand, in some places four, five, even half a dozen deep. From the height of the crest, the sun trembling, the moving bodies resembled larvae wriggling.

The enthusiastic manager of the Valentine Lodge was helping a middle-aged man with a hernia to rise from a grunting, sexually unsatisfied woman. The woman

turned on her side and offered her moist opening to another man who was already mounting a woman that was reading a comic book. The sound of febrile humming, purrs in the throats of couples who were copulating, vibrated in the dry air. "Hold it!" the Resident Artist said, his easel sinking into coagulated clusters of viscous matter, a tiny foot sticking out here and there. A couple rolled over, revealing pillows made of wriggling infants, some with faces buried in the sand. A skinny man scooped up a handful of dust and a creamy slime and smeared it on two spread-eagled women on their backs, then slithered over them, kissing their nipples. "Hold it!" the Resident Artist directed, painting from life.

A handsome woman screamed in pain, then sank to her knees. Her head fell back, mouth wrenched open, as she was seized by another spasm. She toppled backwards, her knees pointed at the sky, pulling frantically at her skirt to lift it, giving one more grunt-scream as her baby's head started to emerge between her legs. A bountifully equipped man saw her fall and worked his way among the undulating bodies and knelt in front of her. He greased himself with sweat from under her arm and pressed up between her knees to enter her. The baby's shoulder appeared, red, sticky, and the kneeling man pushed his groin harder at the side of the vaginal opening. He began thrusting back and forth, hanging onto the woman's knees, pushing them apart with both hands, thrusting. They moaned together. The baby cried, being born.

The two Cupids excused themselves
and ran off for another wandering pair
that had found the bottom of the slope.
Lester turned to see if Edith had blocked
her eyes, but she was watching the scene
intently, stroking the lap of her dress.

Lester smiled and undid his belt buckle
with his dry hand, rubbing the Love

Lotion on his penis.

"Oh, Lester," Edith cried, putting his
hand on her breast, "I didn't know it could
be like this!"

"Oh, let's make babies, darling," he
sighed, as they tumbled down the inside
slope of the dead volcano in each other's
young arms.

###

Orgy

by Eric Nabokov

A stew of spine and muscle
Slaps against the floor.
Profane tongues prod roots
To swift white harvests.

Mouths press yielding flesh.
I bend to sweating hands
As the seed of cancelled couplings
Bursts in quenching spray.

We are wrestlers in a play.
Prompters cue our writhings.
Proust smiles from the wings.
I drown in straining men.

Admonition

(this poem was written in 1934)

by Richard Bennett

If I should shy when next you take my hand,
And lightly chide you for your love's display,
Dear friend, think not that I misunderstand
The warm affection that such acts convey.
If I should find excuse to turn aside
When lightly on my shoulder rests your arm,
Or playfully, by laugh or jest, deride
These contacts between friends -- however warm;
My dear, 'tis nought I care what others think of me --
I shun your love -- lest they think ill of thee.

Celery Celerity Celebrity

by Laura Lechenger

Yes, thank you. I'm glad you like my book. Please, I can't handle compliments. What am I supposed to do? Compliment you back? Who the hell are you? Am I supposed to know you? Forgive me, I'm a stranger here.

I'm surprised, he said. You look so innocent. I do? I said. I was wearing a coat & tie, hoping for one last waltz with Katerina, in line with the rest of her suitors. Your poems aren't innocent at all, he said. Really? I said. Oh. I had no idea what he meant.

Innocent, huh? You mean I'm not a castrating bitch, a ball-breaking bull dyke wimmen's libby type. You mean I'm not dangerous. You can leave your family jewels or your girlfriend in my care without a qualm. Hah. I invent new crimes to commit every day.

Of course I'm a responsible person. I pay for my crimes. I pay even more dearly for yours, & for the crimes I don't commit but ought to. I know my position in life; I consider myself one of the fortunate few. I'm not about to throw all this away lightly.

As a teacher it's my duty, care of the young, a sacred trust, et cetera. Naturally I will try to turn them against you. But I will turn them against myself as well, if they understand at all. I am more like you than you believe; after all, you made me.

Why is it all you men feel obligated to lecture me on feminism? Is it my suit? Don't you like my tie? Is it ok for me to buy, provided it's the brand you're selling? Please tell me. I really want to know. I try to please. I'm glad you like my poetry. What did you say your name was?

Intimations

by R. Daniel Evans

I

He is like a child. He wants me to sleep all night in his bed, the better to possess me.

II

After we have made love, he falls asleep in my arms, breathing deeply. The window rattles in its frame, the room grows colder.

(for

Jeff

A white mushroom in Brittany becomes fungus overnight. Mushrooms sprout on Princess Turandot's robe. The white spaces between the Emperor Hui-Tsung's calligraphy burn into the silk scroll like white wine. In Socrates' words Plato discovered the trees planted around the house of the universe.

III

Dunn)

Outside the window stars rise from heaven and hell.

IV

Looking up I see the faces of children & many others.

Trolls, harpies of Colchis, ghosts of Medea's murdered children, angels defeated by Lucifer: all stare me down. In these faces of great beauty one can see the markings of two world wars, the tallest cypresses grown at Tivoli, the intolerance of corrupt courts. Looking at my hand, I notice a gryphon clawmark: symbol of nuclear power structure. Looking at J, sleeping next to me, I notice his dirty fingernails and strong hands.

V

His right arm sprawls over my chest. He is half asleep.
I take his right hand, hold it on my crotch.

I think of 18th century Venetian dancers. I imagine
J dressed like the puppets of the 'Ca Rezzonico, in faded
satin blue jerkin, rose and blue striped pants, magenta
and scarlet ribbons hanging from his cap. Or how I would
love to dress him in a Minoan bull jumper's codpiece.
Terraced palaces, sailing ships, royal purple & black
octopus ink, dolphins and flying fish painted on walls,
scallop stone throne, tiled rosettes, lustral light wells,
underseas flowers and seaweeds, bare breasted black eyed
women in flounced skirts, music of lyres and triple
flutes sprouting near trees we sit under, bull headed king,
snake goddess, oracle, bull headed king, bull jumper,
snake goddess, bull headed king, oracle king.

VI

His knee touches the small of my back, the way earlier,
his cock in my throat had touched my soul.

At Longwood, our eyes feast on the colors of one hundred
orchids. In the kitchen, I gather chives, white pepper,
garlic, onion, mushrooms, Marsala. These will flavor skin
and flesh of a little dead bird I will feed him. We must
make love on Easter to celebrate resurrection.

VII

Five AM. By the half light from the window I can just see
his profile in the dark. The profile of a young man, a child,
an old man.

It is a priest's profile, tongue coated with magic.

It is the profile of a gay rights marcher, a Quaker,
a man dressed in blue jeans, boots and a blond goatee.

It is the profile of a student, animal lover, man lover.

It is the outline of a gas station, pumps neon lit
those mornings I wait for the number 7 bus.

It is the outline of his sleeping body under a blanket.

It is the outline of a fuschia colored orchid, vulva
mouth, sweet scented.

It is the shape of the orchid room, Longwood Gardens,
Easter Day, yards from the Venus fly-traps.

It is the pink fly-trap mouths.

It is the broken rhythm of Hopi Kachina dancers.

It is the profile of the prayers gods dance in our bed.

It is the confines of a WW I cemetery, Belgium, a field
dotted with countless identical white crosses.

It is a bright sun evaporating the sea late afternoons
on the Adriatic, the Baltic, the Gulf of Mexico.

His profile is the oracle's, the priestess seated at
the tripod, the mouth of the medium, the hands entwined
with snake.

His profile is mine standing next to the Minoans in
their flounced skirts, cheering on the moira or fate of
a fallen Bull King.

His profile is flying fish, fireworks, blue dolphins.

His profile is Chinese calligraphy, Socrates' brow,
Scarlati sonatas.

His profile is forever that of a young man sleeping
in this poem.

VIII

When we make love in the morning it is a ritual honoring God.

God: the tall sequoias in California.

God: the looks he gave me when he first met me.

God: thinking about a love affair after it is over.

God: the sound of my own cry in bed.

God: the pain and ecstasy of St. Teresa envisioning
her own female angel.

God: Annunciation. Acceptance. Visitation.

God: arousal in front of the partner/ in front of
the mirror.

God: the prayer in his bed, in bed, in bed.

IX

I praise the child in him.

I praise the breath on his window.

I praise his stars from heaven and hell.

I praise the faces on his room's ceiling.

I praise his knee resting against my spine.

I praise his cock in my mouth.

I praise his arm and hand lying on my body.

I praise his profile in the dark.

I praise our lovemaking in the morning.

The Blister

by Bernhard Frank

Unpredictable was the word for his students; some days he could stand on his head, a gilded lily in his navel, and elicit no response; others, like that morning... Well, he liked surprises and that rapid-fire exchange of ideas, voluntarily running overtime, had certainly been a surprise.

Eyes unfocused, to avoid countless polite greetings, he threaded his way amid the mass of students feeding into the mainstream from classrooms all along the fluorescently lit hall. He had already passed a tall, slender figure by the department billboard when a sixth sense made him stop and turn round. "Link!"

"Hi, Jerry."

He winced. In that other world he could be Jerry, but here he was Professor Roth. He took Link's extended, long-fingered hand and shook it. "It's good to see you." And he meant it.

But then he became uneasy again. "What are you doing here?" He tried to sound nonchalant.

Link smiled. He knew what Jerry meant. He had never in the past had one good word to say for a formal education. In fact, he had turned down several jobs because he refused to draw on his own college background. "I have an appointment with Mr. McBride," he said. "I'm

about to go back to school."

Jerry looked at him incredulously. Then, "Good for you," he said. His eyes travelled over Link's face. He looked paler than he had remembered him. Almost hungry. And then he noticed a nasty blister on the right side of his mouth. He started to ask about it, then changed his mind.

"You don't seem very surprised," Link said reproachfully.

"Oh, I am, I am." And he was.

"A man has a right to change his mind."

"We can't talk here. Come into my office — for a few moments." He stressed the last phrase.

Link looked him over cautiously. "O.K.," he finally said, "if you're sure you want me to." He sounded almost shy; the rift between them had widened since they had broken off.

Jerry's office mate was out, and Jerry half wished he wasn't. "Sit down, sit down!"

Link pulled a chair up to Jerry's desk. Over his head hung the large portrait of Walt Whitman, done by a student. A gift. He leaned back for a moment and closed his eyes.

Jerry, watching him, felt himself sud-

denly overcome with love and pity. "You're not working then?"

Link shook his head.

He looks exhausted, Jerry thought. Yet then again he felt a doubt breeding in his mind. Was Link really returning to school? Or was it a mere pretext? His tone when he spoke was edged with harshness. "Well," he said, "Mr. McBride is the right man to see. I can put in a good word for you." He was feeling his way.

But Link remained unmoved. "Oh, I'll manage."

"What brought on your change of mind?" It was the appropriate thing to ask.

"That's a long story, and I'm not even sure I'm going through with it."

He is here on a pretext, Jerry decided. How time had swept by them like a movie backdrop, he thought. It had been nearly a year now; yet somewhere in him that coil of love was still wound tight. "It's good to see you again," he said, with deliberately easy camaraderie. Let the boy know he has no more power over me; discourage him from even broaching what he wants.

But Link refused to take the hint. "Yes," he said, "it's good seeing you again," and he held out his hand.

Jerry hadn't the heart to reject it. And as they touched, he felt himself weakening. He thought of the Laokoon, enmeshed in the coils of the serpent. He prayed for his office mate to come; if blackmail was in the offing, Link would never come out with it in the presence of another.

"I looked for you at the bars."

"You know I hate them."

"Well, then, where do you go?"

Jerry gave a pained smile. Where did he go? Nowhere, if the truth were known. After Link, he had somehow given up. It was all too much, and he was too old and too tired to keep playing at the game. He settled for bridge.

"Are you O.K. for money?" he surprised himself saying. But then it occurred to him that it was exactly the thing to have said. Taking the bull by the balls, as he used to tell his students.

Link's eyes opened wide. "Yes," he said slowly. "I'm O.K. for money. You'd be surprised how far a welfare check will go."

Jerry buckled at the mention of welfare; to him, it was degrading. Link's blister registered on his mind now, large and ugly. My god, he thought. But he couldn't very well ask whether he had given it medical attention.

They sat in silence a moment, under Whitman's sagacious figure.

"I've been thinking . . ." Link began; just as he hesitated Ron Mandelbaum entered and swept past to his own side of the office with a distracted "Hi!"

Jerry tensed. If Link meant trouble, this might be the moment. But he had learned over the years to dissemble. "You were saying?" The bull by the balls, he thought, the bull by the balls.

It was Link who backed down. He gesticulated towards Mr. Mandelbaum. "Can't talk here," he seemed to say.

"I've been seeing a lot of Doug and Nelson," Jerry said, pretending not to

understand.

Link looked surprised.

Good, Jerry thought. Let him see I'm not afraid of broaching that other world here. If he is out for blackmail, that'll take the wind out of his tires. The bull by the balls. "Yes. In fact we spent last night playing bridge into the wee hours."

Link gave a half-hearted chuckle, as though to say, "Bridge, I bet!" Then, after a momentary silence, "I'm going over for coffee. Would you care to join me?"

Whatever happened to that appointment with Mr. McBride, Jerry thought with a touch of malice. "I'd love to," he said, "But I've really got to prepare for my next class." He admired his own will power.

"Well . . ." Link said rising. Jerry rose too. But as he stood looking into those elongated caramel eyes, something mellowed and melted in him. If they went out, he thought, for dinner, talked things over . . . But then his eyes fell on the blister at the corner of Link's mouth, and he turned away in revulsion.

No. Link belonged to another world

than his own now, a world of derelicts and hustlers, of unemployed and welfare recipients; and that world could only seek his to drain it; there was no bridge, no possible crossing over.

"Drop in again," he said coolly. "Been so nice."

Once more he felt himself weakening as he touched Link's hand. Love seemed to travel from it up his arm and right down into his heart. He thought he trembled and hated himself for it.

"Yes, it has been nice," Link said. He was still standing, waiting.

"Well," Jerry tossed his head, sat down and picked up a book. Bull by the balls, he thought, bull by the balls. With his peripheral vision he watched Link leaving the room. He looked, Jerry thought, utterly lost, utterly dejected.

He stared at the book in front of him but the print swam before his eyes like tropical fishes; he closed it and went over to Ron Mandelbaum.

"Do you know how long it took me to find a parking spot?" Ron began. "I had to drive round and round, and ended up parking three blocks down the road."

###

The Night I Dreamed I Saw James Dean

by Tom McNamara

Somewhere, where? between heaven and hell
inside a conjuration, in my Solomonic magick mirror
wafted heavenward by angels, I dreamed inside
the Hollywood of my dreams, with creams, of a nation
of outfront Stone-walled studs, a Stonewall Nation of
turned on uncrashable, indestructible James Deans
There was Jimmy in his heavenly manse
just like in the movies and he said to me,
"I'm Jesus now, too and tell them that it's groovy."
No early love affair ensued, our souls just inter-melded
and from our danced trance of muscled love, a new gay world was welded.
Strong as Iron are the men, with eyes of burnished brass
their cheisty chests adorned, their legs, too, sheathed not crass.
Warriors, soldiers, stallions, Knights, a Thelema of my Mater-
dolorosed Mastermynd, a vision of happy joyous youth, a neo-
Aquarian wonder-kind. And I awoke and struggled back, the
mysts of fog dis-pelled, and realised that poor James Dean
was only down in Hell. Alas, alack, I wanted back to see
him once again, when a younger Dean passed my windowsill
and I'll never sleep again.

The Sagatoids

by Kenneth Ross

Robot George wheels up to the urinal.
Out cranks his fifteen inch
stiff metal prick, with nuts.
His camera eye swerves to the right
where a great iron cock
pumps machine grease into the choking urinal,
wire hairs sparking.
The two robots glance nervously
into each other's cameras.
Their masters lie wired in bed,
writhing and moaning obscene names.
Lube gushes, gears begin to spin,
wheels carry them into a stall.
The walls clatter and quake;
a mechanical voice grates,
"Your hole or mine?"
"Mine! Mine! Mine!"
and then come the golden years

Of Promiscuity

by Dan Allen

Sing of promiscuity
Sing a song of lust,
Sex in superfluity:
Call it what you must.

Higgidy hogamus
Poor old monogamous

Hoggidy higamus
Sing of polygamus.

Oh won't you
 won't you marry me
Under the greenwood
 greenwood tree?
We'll be so happy just we three
Or four or maybe more,

In loveland for me and you
and you and you
and you and you
and you.

Cruising

by Aaron Cohen

Do you have a place,
Mr. Mucho-Macho-Mustache?
Do you have a face?

What's your favorite game,
Mr. Curvy-Compact-Crotch?
What's your second name?

Are you really strictly trade,
Mr. Humpier-Than-Thou?
Are you sure you can't be laid?

Could we make it another night,
Mr. Double-of-My-Dreams?
Could you be my Mister Right?

The Light

by William Harrold

The building stands almost finished.
It has dreamed through the winter in its quiet acre of snow.
Now in summer it waits for pigeon wings.
Muscled angels with lunch pails and hammers
removing their hard hats
sit crosslegged in the noon sun
meditating on copper sandwiches.

death of my eyes

by William Harrold

your love broke my skin,
its musical needle turning
me queer for ecstasy.
what will I do now
to make the stars blink on my ceiling?
who will help me free the fire
inside blue matchheads,
your motorcycle sinking
in the grooves of maps,
my heart sending flowers to my eyes.

Model

A Play in One Act

by Douglas Derek Roome

Copyright 1968, 1974

Characters:

Wayne—Age 23

Kenn—Age 14

Time: Early Friday evening, the present.

Place: Wayne's apartment.

Scene: A studio apartment in a converted Victorian mansion in San Francisco. Down Left is door leading to hall. From Left to a little right of Center is a partition. In front of the partition is a low, disorderly bookcase stacked with paperback books and magazines. In front of the bookcase are two safari chairs on either side of a spool table. On the table is a newspaper. At Right Center, opposite the end of the partition, is door to bathroom. Down Right, in an alcove, are a low cabinet, on which is an apartment-size refrigerator, and an oilcloth-covered table, on which is an electric hot plate. The unseen area behind the partition is the bedroom.

At Rise: Stage empty. The sound of a strident buzzer is heard off Left. The sound is repeated. Wayne appears from behind the partition and crosses to door. He is of average height and weight, largely nondescript. He is dressed in slacks and a slightly rumpled dress shirt, and in his stocking feet. The buzzer is heard again just as he opens the door. He stands aside to admit Kenn, who is tall for his age and lank, with longish, dark hair and brown eyes, but of fair complexion. He is wearing a slouch hat, jeans, denim jacket over an orange T-shirt, and boots.

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KENN: Where've you been, cousin?

WAYNE: (Closes the door. At the outset he is vaguely awkward and self-conscious; but this slowly wears off as Kenn establishes his presence) I did some shopping. I thought you were grounded or confined to quarters or something?

KENN: (Removes his hat and jacket and tosses them on to one of the chairs) I am, but the old folks are up at Lake Tahoe, so . . . (Grins) Here I am (gestures), tender and horny. The coffee fresh?

WAYNE: I'll make some. (Crosses to alcove and gets kettle, then goes into bathroom for water)

KENN: (Goes behind partition) Instead of a phone, know what you oughtta get? A spare key — for me!

WAYNE: (Silence)

KENN: Are you thinking?

WAYNE: (Coming out of bathroom with kettle) Yes. (Goes to alcove and puts kettle on hot plate. Gets a clean cup from the cabinet and puts it beside a cup already in use)

KENN: Feel like a movie?

WAYNE: (Shrugs) Whatever's right.

KENN: There's two Vincent Price movies at the drive-in by the Cow Palace. And what's better than horror movies — except maybe Marvel comics? Hey! when'd you get this incense burner?

WAYNE: Yesterday. I liked the shape of it.

KENN: It doesn't look a bit like me.

WAYNE: Why don't you come out here so we don't have to shout?

KENN: (Returns carrying a large cushion) Who's shouting? (Crosses and pushes chair with his hat and jacket on it to one side, installs the cushion in its place, and sits) Hey, remember that dog I told you about? The one that makes all the noise?

WAYNE: The puppy you wanted to feed weed killer?

KENN: Not anymore! Know why? It's a wolf puppy! How's that for anarchy?

WAYNE: How do you know it's a wolf?

KENN: I flashed to it when I was out by the zoo yesterday.

WAYNE: 'Flashed to it'?

KENN: I perceived the striking resemblance — how's that, wiseass?

WAYNE: Much better.

KENN: (Rolls over backwards and gets something from his jacket pocket, then gets up and crosses to alcove) Look what I got you at the flea market. (As he hands it to Wayne) A shoulder patch for The Fighting 69th! (Laughs)

WAYNE: (Faintly ill at ease) Should I wear it over my heart or hang it over the bed?

KENN: (Laughs) Why not sew it on your skivvies?

WAYNE: I don't believe in advertising.

KENN: (Pulling a strand of love beads out from under his shirt) See what I made myself? It's Kenn in Morse code.

WAYNE: What next? An earring?

KENN: (Draws the phrase out, as he will each time he uses it) Why not?

WAYNE: (Takes a pendant from his pocket and gives it to Kenn) Since you're going conspicuous, here's something I found on the beach.

KENN: Do I look like the surfer type?

WAYNE: If you don't want it, don't take it.

KENN: (Shrugs, then puts it on) What's an iron cross among friends?

WAYNE: It's a Formée cross, not a

Maltese.

KENN: Hey! — that's something you can get me, since I'm half Maltese.

WAYNE: (Touching a design on Kenn's wrist) What comes after tattoos? A leather wrist-strap?

KENN: I did that with India ink and a fish hook. Pretty fan-tas-tic! (As he wanders back to his cushion) Do all flits have weird attics?

WAYNE: I wouldn't know — I'm not a prototype.

KENN: (A frequent remark) Dumb fruit!

WAYNE: (His stock answer) Better than being a nut or a vegetable. (Removes kettle from hot plate and prepares two cups of instant coffee)

KENN: I've been thinking of changing my name. (Begins to remove his boots) Any ideas?

WAYNE: (Faint smile) There's Gany-medes . . . Hylas . . . Cyparissus . . . Hyacinthus . . .

KENN: Not a fruity name — something with balls — like Galletto.

WAYNE: (Crossing to table with cups) Which means?

KENN: Young cock. (Accepts the cup

Wayne offers, then takes a sip — which he all but spits out. Sharply) Punta! There's sugar in it?

WAYNE: (Exchanging cups with Kenn)
Sorry about that.

KENN: I always give you the right cup!

WAYNE: (Not argumentatively) Not always.

KENN: (Recovering his equanimity)
Well, maybe I'm not always perfect, but I'm consistently perfect.

WAYNE: (Smiles) And humble.

KENN: Screw humble! Humble's for dirty ol' men. (Tastes coffee) Hmmm. Not bad. Think I'll make room for it. (Wayne looks at him quizzically) Want me to raise my hand? (Does so)

WAYNE: As long as you get it in the bowl, everything's fine.

KENN: (Gets up) If you're going to get fussy I guess I'd better put my glasses on. (Gets them from his jacket and puts them on) I knew it: you're giving me that funny little look again! (Removes his glasses and puts them on the table, then crosses and goes into bathroom. He doesn't close the door)

WAYNE: (Picks up glasses) I don't know, you and 'specs' just don't go together.

KENN: (affected voice) Sorry 'bout that, ole sport. (Can be heard urinating — and whistling "Little Red Rooster.")

WAYNE: (Puts Kenn's glasses down) At least he's consistently perfect. (Sound off Right of toilet flushing)

KENN: (Returning to his cushion) It was my favorite color: canary yellow.

WAYNE: I thought your favorite color was blue?

KENN: Blue piss! Wouldn't that be fantastic?

WAYNE: You'd be the star of the carnival.

KENN: (With a gesture) The Amazing Dr. Bluepiss!

WAYNE: Amazing.

KENN: (Sips his coffee) . . . Have you really read all those books.

WAYNE: (Shrugs) Most of them.

KENN: Why don't you sell the ones you've read and get a stereo or a TV?

WAYNE: Used books aren't worth much.

KENN: Don't you ever feel kind of out of it?

WAYNE: (Thin smile) My being out of

'it' doesn't have anything to do with owning or not owning a stereo or TV.

KENN: Why don't you ever try to get me to read some of them — don't you want to influence me?

WAYNE: You mean you're tired of influencing me?

KENN: I got a fortune with my bubble-gum today that said: 'An older person will try to guide you. You may benefit greatly.' Must have meant someone else, huh?

WAYNE: (Sharply — an over-reaction that he immediately regrets) Yes! — someone else!

KENN: (Stares at Wayne) Sometimes I need subtitles to know what's going on with you.

WAYNE: Sorry . . .

KENN: (Picks up newspaper) I wasn't making fun of you.

WAYNE: . . . Do you know what the three most popular party games are? Monopoly, astrology and psychology. (Feels his shirt pocket, which is empty)

KENN: You quit smoking — remember?

WAYNE: I don't think it'll be long before I have a relapse.

KENN: Hey, what time were you born? I met this fan-tas-tic gypsy who does charts. I'm Sagitarrius with Aquarius rising.

WAYNE: That equals hot air.

KENN: Come on — what time?

WAYNE: What if I don't want my chart done?

KENN: Well, I do. I want to see if we're compatible.

WAYNE: (Can't help smiling) You're supposed to ask the password before you open the gates.

KENN: (Gets up) Pervert! Got any cheese or fruit, fruit?

WAYNE: There's a gouda and some Monterey jack, punk. And some oranges.

KENN: (Crossing to alcove) I'll find out, you sneaky bugger. . . . How long before I get an answer about the key?

WAYNE: I'm still thinking.

KENN: (Getting a wedge of cheese from the refrigerator) Scared I'll bring somebody here while you're at work?

WAYNE: Nothing that specific.

KENN: If it were my place, I'd give you a key.

WAYNE: (Silence)

KENN: (Begins to peel an orange) . . .
Sometimes I don't really believe you
lost your cherry.

WAYNE: Sorry about that.

KENN: You really did it, huh?

WAYNE: I really did — even if I didn't
get a receipt. In fact, I lost my cherry
before I lost my . . . (Vague gesture)
olive and onion?

KENN: (Laughs) Olive and onion! (Throws
some orange peel at Wayne) That's
beautiful!

WAYNE: (Picking up the peel thrown at
him) Glad you liked it.

KENN: How old were you?

WAYNE: Fifteen.

KENN: (Returns slowly to cushion, still
peeling and eating orange) You can tell
me about it, I won't spread it around
that you aren't all queer.

WAYNE: (Shrugs) Not much to it. I was
with a friend, and we watched each
other.

KENN: I wouldn't let anybody watch me
the first time. But after I got good at
it I wouldn't care. . . . Did you like
being a kid?

WAYNE: Sometimes. I never really had
the knack for it. Something like an
inner ear disorder.

KENN: Huh?

WAYNE: I never seemed able to keep my
balance.

KENN: (Gets up and crosses to bath-
room) Why can't they make an orange
that isn't sticky?

WAYNE: Oranges are supposed to be
sticky; it's their nature.

KENN: (Over the sound of running water)
"Liberate" anything from the store to-
day?

WAYNE: No. (Water stops running) I
didn't need to.

KENN: (Emerging from bathroom) With
all the stuff they got, you ought to try
for something really good.

WAYNE: It isn't the value of the object
that matters, it's the gesture. It's a
little jolt — like sticking your finger in
a socket . . . I do it to keep sane.

KENN: (Hand under shirt, petting his
stomach and picking at his navel) Do
you understand all the stuff you let out
of your head?

WAYNE: (Smiles up at Kenn) No, not
entirely.

KENN: (Returns to cushion) Care for some souvenir navel lint? (Holds his hand out to Wayne)

WAYNE: (Accepts the tiny wad of lint and examines it) How charming. I'll treasure it always. (Puts it in his shirt pocket)

KENN: (Picking at a scab on the back of his right hand) You could keep it in a locket.

WAYNE: What next — a friendship ring?

KENN: Why not? The whole trip — sealed in blood.

WAYNE: (Watching Kenn with interest) Is that why you're picking off that scab?

KENN: It itches. (Sucks the wound he's opened) Tastes better with salt. How's your blood?

WAYNE: (Shrugs) There.

KENN: Mine's sweet and wholesome — like the rest of me. (Offers his hand) Care for a taste? (Wayne hesitates, then accepts the offer. Withdrawing his hand) Vampire! I always knew you were after my virgin blood.

WAYNE: (Colors in spite of himself) I should have known it was a trap. . . . Want a band-aid?

KENN: No. . . . Figured out why you

like kids yet?

WAYNE: (Quietly) Because it's forbidden.

KENN: Hey! I like that! Say it again.

WAYNE: I like boys because it's forbidden.

KENN: Fan-tas-tic! No corners to get trapped in. Did you just think that up?

WAYNE: No, I've been waiting for you to ask again. (Gets up) And now for your reward for appreciating my answer! (Crosses to alcove and gets two candy bars from the cabinet)

KENN: I have a surprise too, but yours first.

WAYNE: (Returns and gives Kenn the candy) From the health food store, but still the basic treat used by dirty old men.

KENN: (Giggles) Do I have to sit on your lap and let you fiddle with me?

WAYNE: (Sits) No, I think we're past that stage.

KENN: (Tastes one of the candy bars, then searches the wrapping for the ingredients) What's in it?

WAYNE: No sugar. The part that tastes like chocolate is made from carob

seeds.

KENN: Not bad. Trying to keep me from getting cavities?

WAYNE: Sugar also spoils your complexion.

KENN: You mean if I start to break out in pimples, the romance is over?

WAYNE: No. But look how clear your skin is. (Kenn does) Almost translucent. Magical.

KENN: (Laughs) Man, you're insane! (Pounds the floor with his heels) Spaced right out of the universe!

WAYNE: (Anxiously) Easy, easy! The only thing that keeps that old bastard downstairs alive is complaining!

KENN: (Stops pounding) Screw him! With a rusty pipe! (Giggles)

WAYNE: I think he does it to himself.

KENN: Hey! My surprise! (Gets two hand-rolled cigarettes from his jacket) Psychedelic corn silk! Isn't Kenn a good boy?

WAYNE: Beautiful How much do I owe you?

KENN: I haven't decided yet. But it's worth it, believe me — it's real dynamite weed. Want to turn on now?

WAYNE: Let's save it for later — we still have to get to the movies and back.

KENN: I'll help you drive! On the natural's not the best way to see horror movies.

WAYNE: Nothing like living dangerously.

KENN: That's what I say!

WAYNE: Well, I suppose there isn't too much risk at the drive-in.

KENN: What's a little risk among friends?

WAYNE: There's a difference between a new risk and a familiar one.

KENN: Cops aren't as smart as you think.

WAYNE: It isn't their intelligence that worries me.

KENN: (Jumps up) Hey! I want to wear your ski sweater!

WAYNE: No.

KENN: Thanks. (Goes behind partition)

WAYNE: What if I meant no?

KENN: What if it rained blue piss?

WAYNE: I could mean no — it's my best sweater.

KENN: And I'm your best friend. (Wayne smiles) So you should let me use your best things.

WAYNE: I suppose there's a certain amount of logic to that.

KENN: (Returns carrying a bulky ski sweater and a newspaper supplement) Where'd you get this?

WAYNE: (Starts, then recovers his poise. Kenn doesn't notice) It was in yesterday's paper.

KENN: (Turning pages and pausing to look more closely) We both could use some new rags. . . . Hey! (Hands the supplement to Wayne) See the blond kid in the white shorts? I used to hang around the arcades with him — his name's Erni! (Takes off his shirt) His mother works at a garment place — that's how he got started modelling. (Puts on the sweater)

WAYNE: Why didn't he get you a job? It's supposed to pay very well.

KENN: (Knowing smile) I had offers.

WAYNE: And Erni?

KENN: All the time. But he wasn't interested. We were only twelve. (Flops on cushion) Hey! How'd you like some skin shots of me? We could use my old man's polaroid.

WAYNE: (Tossing the supplement onto the table) I smell cheese, so it must be a trap.

KENN: For real! Something real tender — in just my "dimples."

WAYNE: (Evading) You have nice dimples.

KENN: I'm serious! We could take a trip up the coast and find a safe place. Take a lunch and have a picnic. Maybe even find some back roads for me to practice driving on.

WAYNE: (Silence. He wants the pictures because in a year or less Kenn will no longer interest him; and he doesn't want them because they would intrude upon the present)

KENN: Well, say something!

WAYNE: I'm thinking.

KENN: What's there to think about? Don't you want some souvenir pictures of the real Kenn?

WAYNE: Very much, but there are other considerations . . .

KENN: We could do it here if you're nervous about going outdoors — but outdoors would be better! Inside looks too much like those dumb skin shots in the physique magazines.

WAYNE: (Nods) Tacky.

KENN: Right! . . . Well?

WAYNE: (Finally aware that Kenn feels slighted by his reluctance) . . . You know I do.

KENN: (Smiles) Then say yes!

WAYNE: Yes . . .

KENN: That's more like it!

WAYNE: . . . And how do I repay you for the favor?

KENN: I'll think of something.

WAYNE: Something that opens doors?

KENN: See, you're not so dumb after all. Just a small token of your appreciation, that's all.

WAYNE: A small token did you say?

KENN: I won't bring anybody here! I just feel kind of . . . double-naked standing out in the hall sometimes — like when you take your time answering the door. Maybe you don't know it, but your neighbors like to peek out — and stare! It really gets super-freaky sometimes.

WAYNE: (Softly) Why not?

KENN: Fan-tas-tic! You won't regret it.

WAYNE: I'll do my best . . .

KENN: . . . We'll take a roll of black and white and a roll of color. And you can pose once on each.

WAYNE: (Starts, then recovers. Kenn doesn't notice) No thanks — I'm not curious about the figure I cut on film.

KENN: You can keep the pictures — I just want to see how you look.

WAYNE: Is that a condition?

KENN: Getting modest all of a sudden?

WAYNE: No . . .

KENN: It's just to see how photogenic you are. No big deal. (Grins) It's me we really care about!

WAYNE: (Thin smile) . . . Are there any more Greeks inside the horse?

KENN: (Starts to put on his boots) Huh?

WAYNE: It isn't important, Dimples.

KENN: I knew you'd come around to seeing things my way. (Glances at Wayne) Hey, kid, get movin'!

WAYNE: (As he gets up) Oh, yes — the the moving pictures!

KENN: The ol' folks won't be back till Sunday, so we could go tomorrow.

WAYNE: (As he disappears behind the partition) Strike while the defenses are down.

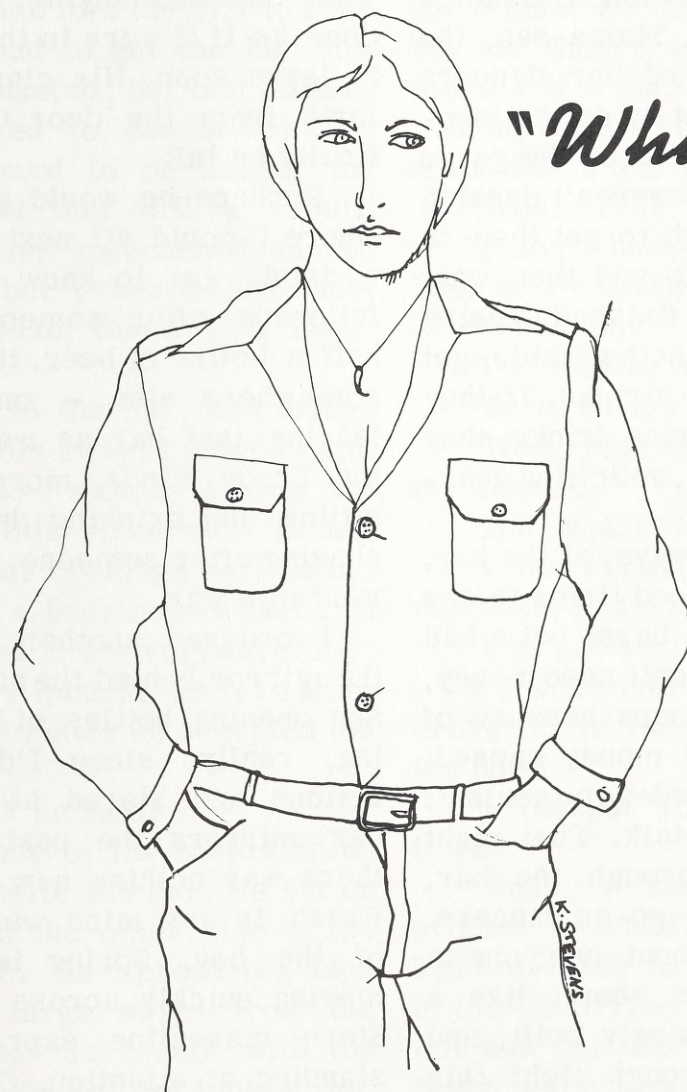
KENN: (Gets up and puts his jacket on)
I can't wait to see how I turn out.
With polaroid you don't have to wait
for developments.

WAYNE: You do the thinking.

KENN: (Grins) That's what I've been
telling you since the night you picked
me up!

Curtain.

###



"Whiskey"



Whiskey

by Daniel Luckenbill

Thinking back, it must have been Saturday and close after payday. The Trade Winds Bar in Lawton, Oklahoma was crowded with GI's. Mama-san, the Korean owner, had all of her dancers there. Not one song went by on the jukebox without a girl up there on the go-go platform. The girls who weren't dancing sat with GI's long enough to get them to buy two or three drinks and then went back to dance. When they finished dancing again, they would go to another table, get those GI's to buy them drinks. If they weren't dancing or ordering drinks, they went round with a pitcher, soliciting quarters for the jukebox.

I sat alone as I did always, at the bar. Days after payday were good times to see lots of butch GI's in the bars, but a bad time for pickups. They didn't need money, they were usually in groups because of the fights having all that money caused, and the bars were so crowded you couldn't get one boy aside and talk. That night one boy moved alone through the bar, talking to buddies or the go-go dancers. He seemed to know just about everyone in the place. His hair was short, like a GI's. He was tall, pleasingly built, and showed a good cock through tight thin pants.

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He went to sit with one of the go-go girls. He paid no attention to the girl, what she was saying. He looked out the door as if it were in the back of his mind to leave soon. His glance went back and forth from the door to his watch, until finally he left.

Perhaps he would go to another bar, where I could sit next to him, offer him a drink, get to know him. But so often following after someone meant leaving half a bottle of beer, then buying another somewhere else — only to see the boy leaving that bar as well. So I stayed at the Trade Winds, more comfortable just sitting and drinking than I would be out chasing after someone. The nights usually went this way.

I ordered another Coors, stared in the mirror behind the bar, watched Mama-san opening bottles of beer. Seeing nothing, really, since I'd memorized her actions and stared at my reflection in bar mirrors the past few nights until there was nothing new to see in my face. Fresh in my mind were the attractions of the boy. Spring in his walk, a GI moving quickly across the Battery area. Stern masculine expression, a soldier standing at attention. Outline of the cock in his trousers, its bulk between his legs

when he sat down, its length and definition when he stood.

The bars close early in Oklahoma, so by eleven-thirty Mana-san was already counting up her bar receipts. As I got my last beer — Mama-san wasn't too busy to make the rounds of the bar for one last drink — I saw the boy come back in. He came directly to the bar and started talking to one of the girls. They didn't talk long. Mama-san told the girl to keep circulating. She had to get the last few quarters for the jukebox, the last dollars for beer. He talked to one of the GI's playing pool, seemed to be asking for something and was met with a rebuff. The next person he approached moved away from him, but I heard him say: "Fifteen dollars, man, that's all I need, is fifteen."

He came back to the bar, and though I was several stools away, I moved right up to him, and without saying the weather's bad or this place sure is dull tonight — my usual openings — I asked if I could buy him a beer before last call was over. He looked at me very carefully, very appraisingly, I thought, as if he knew what would be asked once he accepted the beer.

"Get me a Bud," he said.

We moved to one of the booths lining the long wall opposite the bar. He sat on one side, I sat on the other side of the table in the booth. He spread his legs wide apart, took large swigs from the beer bottle, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He did not look at me, said nothing, and I could think of nothing

to say. He stared absent-mindedly at the dancer, at the other people in the bar. Then he turned to me.

"I need some money," he said. "Fast."

"I've got a bit."

"I need ten bucks right away."

"I've got that much."

He looked away again. Was he waiting for me to say what I wanted in return, or was he just trying to hustle a stranger for a loan? He hadn't asked me for fifteen, but he wasn't telling any of the usual stories if a loan were all he had in mind. I didn't know how to say what I wanted from him. I told him I had fifteen dollars.

"Where is it?"

"I don't have that much with me. It's back at my hotel."

"Which one?"

"I'm staying at the Lawtonian."

"Sure, I know where that is. Let's go."

"Well, yes, but—" I still couldn't make my demand.

"But what?" He looked straight at me.

"I don't have a car, but I guess we can walk, it's not far from —"

"I've got a car."

We went outside to his Volkswagen. He drove off in the opposite direction from the hotel.

"I thought you said you knew where it was."

"Yeah, I know. Just want to drive around a while." Checking things out. That seemed to be the favorite pastime of the GI's. They came into town, checked out one bar after another, to see if anything were happening. They never made things happen, they reacted to whatever

was going on around them. Until they got drunk enough, bored and frustrated enough to start fights.

Some of them caught on to the place, realized nothing happened unless you paid for it. Then you could get drunk, find a whore somewhere for a few minutes, or, if you were lucky, a few hours. But even between paydays they inundated the town, walking up and down the streets, in one bar and out the other. Expecting things to be exciting since they were in the service and away from home. Feeling disappointed and hurt because they weren't treated like someone special the way they were in their hometowns.

I asked if the car were new. It had the smell of a new car, the unpleasant odor of new vinyl and carpet. The ashtray had one butt in it.

"Bought it today."

"I thought you said you needed money."

"Bought this for five hundred down. Broke me. All of a sudden, tonight, this guy shows up I owe some money."

He drove around in circles, did the downtown blocks several times. This seemed to be his version of checking things out. Except he didn't look into any of the bars we passed or at the cars passing us by, making the same circle. Nor did he look at me. He looked straight ahead or else at the speedometer and pressure gauges.

"You got a sensible car, at least. I bought one today, too, a sportscar. Rather, I ordered it from Oklahoma City. I haven't got it yet. I should have spent less money, got a car like this."

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"Had a Pontiac, sold that. Damn wife. Had to sell it cause of her. Got a divorce last week, she wanted some money."

"Are you in the Army? What rank are you?"

"Her old man's a colonel."

"What rank are you?"

"Me? Buck sergeant. One thing I can't stand, it's a fucking officer. What about you, you in the Army?"

I answered him yes, but didn't volunteer any information about my rank after his remark about officers. But he wasn't interested in me that much to ask. He was caught up in his complaining.

"Army's for shit, ain't it? I'm from Oklahoma, but I never set foot in this damn town before I was in the Army. Just a place you drive through on the way down to Dallas or somewhere ever so often. Wouldn't even stop to piss and get a cup of coffee."

To need money right away, he certainly was taking his time. He made another circle, the same route again. Like everything else in Lawton, the traffic lights were never coordinated. It didn't keep him from speeding away from the lights, only to have to stop at the next one.

"Yeah, she acted so high and mighty. Called me a bastard for picking up on some go-go dancer once." He shifted rapidly from first to second. "I know what she did when I was in the Nam. Went to the officers' club with that fucking full bird father of hers and went home with some second louie just out of OCS. Glenda — she works at the Trade Winds — she

told me she saw that bitch out with an officer one night." He gained speed and shoved it into third. "Bet she didn't sleep alone too damn many nights the year I was gone." He was trying to get a good speed on the city streets so he could relax into fourth. "Then she talks about me. Yeah, I miss that Pontiac, but this car is pretty good."

Just as I thought he was going to make the circle again, he stopped and turned the car in the right direction for the hotel. He put his right palm on the knob of the floor-shift, then curled his fingers around it, gripped it tightly. "One thing I like, this car's got over the Pontiac. Stick shift. Like the Pontiac, but this gives you more of a feeling you're driving. Know what I mean?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I like to put it through all the gears."

He pulled up close to the Lawtonian, but not where we could be seen from inside. "I'll let you go up first and then I'll come in. People around Lawton know me. Which room you in?"

"Six-o-eight."

"I'll wait here a few minutes."

I was feeling good. Before I went to Viet Nam, I had picked up a straight GI, brought him here to the Lawtonian. We sat up all night, drinking whiskey and talking, and then we went to bed early in the morning.

"Do you like bourbon?" I asked him. "I've got a bottle up in my room. Want me to get something to go with it?"

"Bourbon and seven, sure. Sounds good. Go on, now. I don't want the doorman to

see us together."

There still had been no mention of sex. Maybe he would just get himself into the room, take the money from me and leave. While taking the elevator to my room, I got nervous. I had forgotten to get the seven-up. The matronly operator was trying to make conversation about the hot fall weather. I remembered the name tags on my suitcases. Name, rank and serial number.

The rooms in the hotel were modern, sterile, with flashy orange drapes and spread. My bed had been made up, suitcases stacked neatly in the corner. The tags weren't visible.

He came up about five minutes later. "Not a bad room," he said. "Even got a TV."

"It's OK."

I sat on the bed. He stood against the wall at the foot of the bed.

"Where's the fifteen dollars?"

"I have it, but first . . ."

"You want to blow me. OK." He began unbuckling his pants. I lay back on the bed and took off my clothes. He made no move to take off any of his clothes, didn't even unbutton his shirt.

"Won't you take off your clothes? Please."

"I've never done that. No, I can't do that."

Kneeling blowjobs to standing boys. Sometimes it's exciting: quick, surreptitious. Being alone behind a locked door made me want to go further. His unwillingness now made me want even more to make him take off his clothes. It didn't

matter I was paying him money to do it.

"No, I can't do that," he repeated.

"Why not?"

"Well, I just can't. It doesn't . . . well, it doesn't seem like enough money. No. Can't do that. Not for fifteen."

"For how much, then?"

"I don't know. This guy in Oklahoma City once, he gave me fifteen. For just letting him blow me. How about twenty-five?"

"I don't have that much."

"How much you got?"

Stupidly, I told the truth. "Twenty."

"OK, then. For twenty. I've never done this before. Doesn't seem like enough money."

He moved to the chair, leaned against that and took off his shoes and socks. Then his shirt and tee-shirt. He had smooth white skin, hairless. A trim, well-muscled body. He started to push down his pants, stopped, looked at me. "I bet you got more than twenty."

"No. Really. I just bought this whiskey. I only have twenty."

He seemed convinced, or maybe he thought he could wait until later and just take it. He took off his shorts. His cock was beautiful. Long, uncut. He stood at the edge of the bed, his cock lengthening, the skin pulling back from the head. I pulled at my own penis, small and circumcised.

"What you want me to do?"

"Just lie there on the bed, I guess."

He lay on his back, bent his legs to be comfortable. I moved my face to his thighs. My lips brushed the length of

soft skin curving over the solid muscles. His cock was hard. I moved to put a pillow under him.

"What's that for?"

"So I can get to your asshole."

"Hey, no, man, I don't get fucked."

"I don't want to. Just lick you there."

"Hell, you don't need a pillow for that." He lifted his legs, exposing the hairless, puckered opening. I put my tongue to the encircling tucks, pushed at them, and they stretched. He was jerking himself off.

He thrust his legs straight up in the air so my tongue could drive deeper. I moved my hands up his legs. Skin of thighs taut, calves heavy-hanging, full and round. He moved his hand faster. "Oh, baby," he moaned, drawing out the syllables. He grabbed my head between his hands, lifted it, moved my mouth to his cock and after only two or three short pumping sucks, he came. "Oh, baby," he repeated.

I looked up to his face. He moved one arm behind his head. The flesh of the underarm was whiter, even, than the rest of his body. There was no more than a wisp of light brown hair. The hand and arm which had remained insistent at the back of my head now rested heavily on my shoulder.

When he became aware of his relaxing, he tensed quickly, and went to the bathroom. As I lay on the bed, I could hear him pissing into the john and the faucet spitting water into the basin. I thought of him, what I had made him say, as I felt myself ready to come. Then I

noticed him standing at the door to the bathroom, drying his cock.

"That's it," he said, "go ahead and finish yourself off."

I didn't want to, then. I wanted his hand gripping me. I wanted him to put me through all the gears. Wanting to connect, knowing I couldn't, I made myself come.

He went back into the bathroom and I got up and followed him. He stood naked in front of the mirror, combing his hair. He moved his head from side to side, to be sure his hair looked good from all angles.

"You have a great body," I told him. I touched him, caressed him, somehow enjoying it even more now. It seemed very domestic, sharing the bathroom. It almost made up for not sharing the whiskey and talking.

"Your body's not bad, either."

"I'm too skinny. No muscles. A fat, woman's ass — but hairy. Not slim and smooth like yours."

"Have it your way."

He dressed quickly. I gave him the twenty and he left. I didn't dress, just lay on the bed. "Oh, baby," he had said.

A GI I had in Viet Nam said that. Hotel room in Nha Trang. Told him I only wanted some pictures. For twenty dollars. But he got a hard-on and I persisted until he lay on the bed. I jacked him off. Even with some suntan lotion as lubricant, took him a long time. He tensed all the muscles of his body. He screwed his eyes shut and almost shouted: "Make me come, I want to come." I wanted to stop then, but he was ready.

"Take it," he said. "Oh, baby," he had said.

I thought of the relaxing heaviness of the boy's hand on my shoulder, the warmth of his arm brushing my back. I moved his other arm to my other shoulder until he was embracing me.

After I washed myself off, I went to sleep. Sometime in the early morning there was a loud knock at the door. Leaving the chain on, I opened it. The boy again.

"I forgot something," he said. He looked like he'd been up all night. His clothes were disheveled. His hands were clenched into fists, but tucked into his sides. His eyes showed no emotion; still I was nervous.

"What did you forget?" I asked, taking off the chain. He pushed his way past me. He was very drunk now that he had money for booze. The bars had been closed when he'd left, he must have got a bottle from someone. "What is it? There's nothing here."

He looked around the room until he saw the bottle of whiskey on the table beside the bed. "Damn Volkswagen, damn women . . ."

I moved toward him, wanting to touch him again.

"Stay away from me," he said.

He picked up the bottle of whiskey, gripped it tightly around the neck. He left.

Twenty dollars wasn't enough.

###

Prisoner of War

by W. I. Scobie

Dread German prisoner-of-war was our Werner, sent to slave
On a sea-girt Sussex farm where we as schoolboys stayed,
Planting potatoes, sheaving the bright golden wheat
— They called it 'our war effort' — there in the brave
Summer sun. O furtively we adored
His gleaming shoulders; hue and slew of him; arms, how they strained!
How he hung, under his horsehair clothes, my eyes absorbed.

He could play, all charm, all childlike, in the stooks
All day, it was we were his captives, we crept
To see how he shone — a miracle! — when he stepped
From the stuff they had locked his limbs in,
And shouting we rode his bright back when he
Dived like a dolphin at day's end to shed his sweet sweat in the sea
Then cast us, close-clutching starfish, back on the sands.

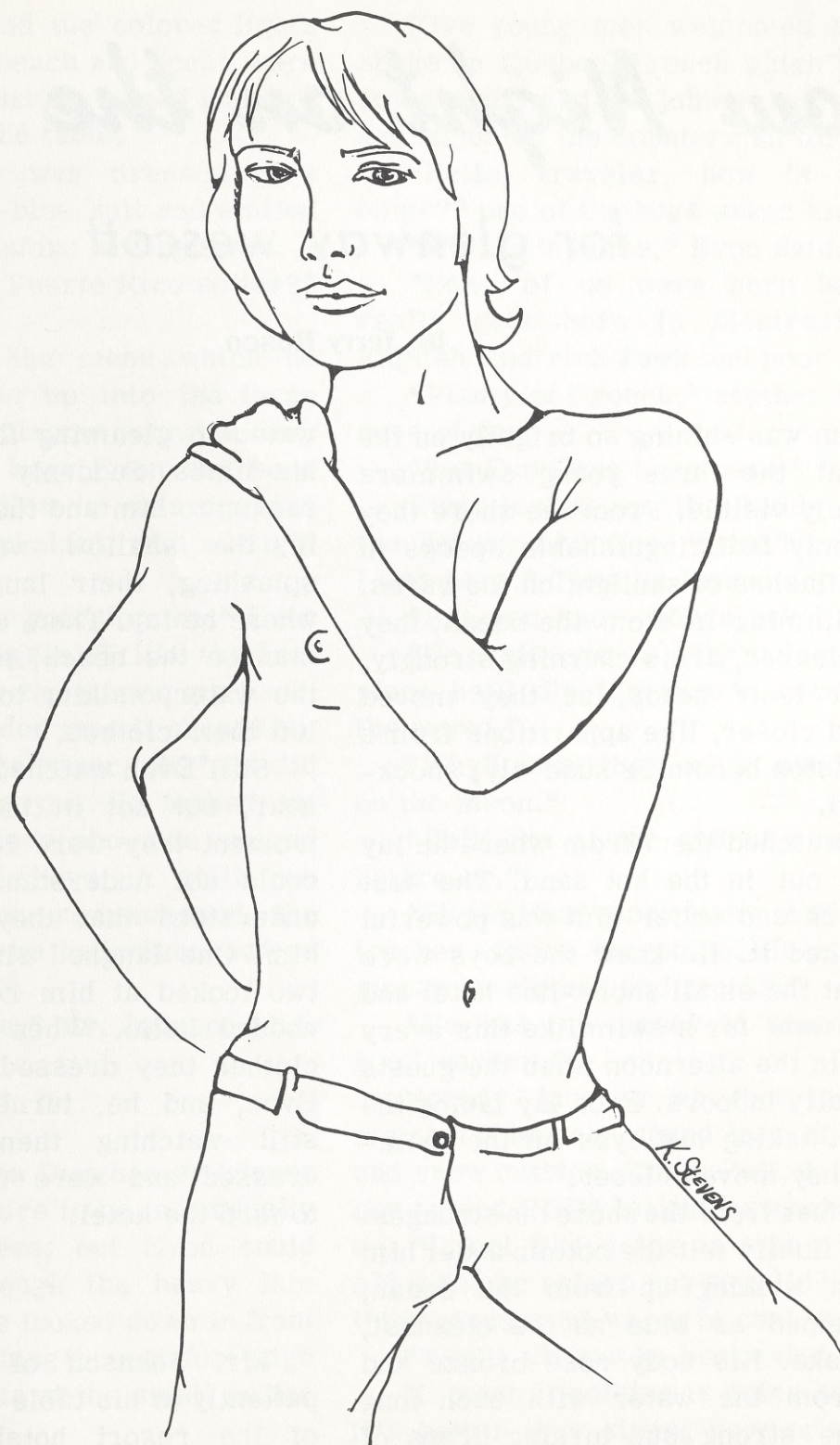
I myself once entered that heaven, fell to those hands,
Sliding in harvest to meet with a mouth
That amazingly kissed me, and without guile
Showed all its startling-white teeth in a smile.
Man's smell I gulped down. O never-before-by-a-man-kissed!
My universe rocked like the sea.

O for me

O for me

Great baby-bright blubbery child still, he was a star:
I seek and search, friends, but find no-where a similar
Soul, shining all godlike with sea-diamonds, without scar.

Evon



Slow Night on the Moon

for glenway wescott . . .

by Jerry Rosco

The sun was shining so brightly on the water that the three young swimmers were barely visible. From the shore they seemed only indistinguishable specks in the white flashes of sunlight on the waves. Then, swimming in from the ocean, they became clearer, arms churning strongly, high over their heads, as they moved closer and closer, like apparitions from a perfect vision becoming suddenly, shockingly, real.

Evon watched them from where he lay stretched out in the hot sand. The heat on his back and under him was powerful but he liked it. He knew the boys were workers at the small shore-line hotel and that they went for a swim like this every day, late in the afternoon when the guests were usually indoors. Evon lay facing the water, not taking his eyes off the swimmers as they moved closer.

Forty feet from the shore the strongest swimmer finally felt the bottom under him and began walking up from the ocean, which seemed as blue as the cleanest, deepest lake. His body rose bronze and perfect from the water with each long stride, the strong sun turning drops of

water to gleaming flashes that ran down his limbs. Suddenly the other two youths ran up to him and the three crashed down in the shallow water, wrestling and splashing, their laughter reaching Evon where he lay. Then, seeing only the young man on the beach, the three came out of the water, walking toward where they had left their clothes.

Still Evon watched them as they passed near, but not in the same way. For a moment they were looking at him and he could not understand their language but understood that they were talking about him. One laughed slightly, but the other two looked at him respectfully, one even nodded hello. When they reached their clothes they dressed in silence, watching Evon, and he, turned on his side, was still watching them. Then they were dressed and were moving up the beach toward the hotel.

* * *

Mr. Johnson of Washington waited patiently at his table on the dining terrace of the resort hotel. There was little

moonlight and, beyond the colored lights of the terrace, the beach and ocean were in darkness. Mr. Johnson turned and saw Evon walking up to the table.

The young man was dressed in a light-weight powder-blue suit and smiled a charming smile before sitting down.

"How do you like Puerto Rico so far?" Mr. Johnson asked.

Evon looked at the menu which he could not read, then up into the large black eyes of the handsome young waiter. He was one of the boys Evon had seen swimming earlier. Now he was dressed in white trousers and shirt, with a bright red jacket.

"The sun is very good for me," Evon said, looking down again. "I like the heat in the daytime. I like the sun on my back. But at night it is colder than it should be, maybe because of the water, eh?" He did not feel like talking yet. He looked out to the darkness where the tide moved gently against the shore. A chill ran through him and he remembered the mescaline capsules he had taken before dressing.

"I'll order for you," Mr. Johnson said.

* * *

The lighted sign on Dorchester Avenue showed the temperature to be an unusually warm twenty degrees, but Evon could barely read it through the heavy late night snow storm. He looked down in front of him, his boots pushing through foot-high snow, and then he was at the small coffee shop.

Five young men welcomed him. They spoke in Quebec French which he understood well, and he joined them at a table and signaled the counterman for a coffee.

"Hello, traveler, how is it to be home?" one of the boys asked him.

"Well, it's home," Evon said.

"None of us were born here. Who really gets born in Montreal besides English and rich Jews and poor Greeks?"

"Plenty of French," another said, "but none of us."

"But Evon was born here."

Evon looked up. His hands encircled the hot cup of coffee. "I don't know where I was born." Then he looked down.

"But you know where you'll die, eh?"

"No, this one is a traveler. The only place he'll die for sure in somewhere in the world."

"Why? Soon they might need hustlers on the moon."

"He'll die at the end of a needle in a bathroom."

"Stupid, that's not funny. And he never touches sister morphine. He spends his money on clothes and steaks."

"He has the money to spend. He's a good worker."

Nobody laughed at that, and for a moment the only sound was of the wind and snow outside. Then a tall, dark-haired boy named Elliot leaned forward and spoke up. "I feel like going to a bar. Since the old men are asleep anyway, I'd like something young and warm to curl up to."

"You'll always be broke that way."

"I mean if nothing is going on anyway. It's better than sitting here or at the bus

station. I still have feelings, you know. Someday I'll fall in love."

"Certainly. On a slow night up on the moon."

"And look who's not talking tonight."

"Sure, Evon's too good for us now. He's been to Puerto Rico. Look at the sunburn."

"And he's got a sugardaddy from Washington. Maybe that's his next stop."

"His bags are always packed."

Evon stood up and began buttoning his coat.

"But, baby, where are you going, we love you."

"I'm just going up to sleep at the Y. I feel too cold tonight."

"Goodnight, pretty angel. Sleep well."

Evon smiled at them. "Thank you."

* * *

From the window of the dormitory room he looked down at M Street. The morning traffic heading into D.C. annoyed him with its urgency, and he turned back to the bed. Happy in its warmth, he curled close to the sleeping youth whose fair features were beautiful to him. The boy's long straight blonde hair covered the pillow and ran down his shoulders onto his chest. Evon nuzzled his head against the other's chest, tasting the golden hair between his teeth. Then the boy woke and with one strong arm pressed Evon's slim body hotly down against him. Evon's eyes closed. He felt the kiss, he felt it, he felt it go through him.

"I wish I could stay all day with you,"

he whispered, "but I have to see someone in the city."

"That's all right," the other said, as he sat up to look at a clock on the dresser, "I have to get to classes today."

* * *

Dressed in a suit, Evon waited patiently in the reception room of a modern office building. Finally he heard the sound of high heels in the hallway. A small, middle-aged woman entered the reception room, glanced sharply at him, and walked up to his chair. He stood, awkwardly.

"Are you Mr. Vinet?" she asked.

"Yes."

The woman smiled automatically and handed him a sealed envelope. "Mr. Johnson says he's sorry, that there must be some misunderstanding about your having an appointment. He said to give you that." When she saw the young man's eyes drop, the woman didn't wait for a thank you, but turned and left the room.

Evon heard her walk down the hall and he dropped back into the chair. He ripped open the envelope and saw a short note scribbled on an index card, and a one hundred dollar bill. When he looked up, the receptionist had stopped her work and was staring at him.

* * *

Walking down East 11th Street at night was like moving through an ice-cold tunnel. All the small broken-down tenements looked the same to Evon, and all the time he'd been staying at the apartment he

found it necessary to search for building number 622.

Three figures were coming down the long block from the opposite direction. In the distances between streetlamps they seemed to disappear in shadows, but their footsteps remained loud, their approach menacing. Evon glanced at them as they passed . . . they were handsome, stocky and mean-looking, their denim jackets buttoned tight, their dark eyes piercing through him as they continued on, speaking in rapid Spanish and laughing.

Inside the apartment, in bed, it was still too cold. The red-haired Irish boy lying next to him in the dark was smoking a cigarette. He saw that Evon was still awake and sat up, exposing himself to the unheated room, his eyes wide, the motor of his body running. Curled up under the blankets, Evon stretched out an arm and touched the other gently.

"Fuck off! I'm not in the mood. Don't you know anything?"

"Yes," Evon said, almost to himself, "I know all about speed when you put it in your veins."

"Yeah, sure," said the red-haired boy. Then he lay back again and said, quietly, "You know what you see and I know what I feel. It's two different things. Maybe you're right."

The window of the room had no shade, and light from a streetlamp glared in, a narrow beam running along the wooden floor and across the blankets. Evon watched the Irish boy sit up and reach for his cigarette pack again. There were no matches, and he pushed off the blankets

and got up to find some. He walked back to the window and stood looking out it, one arm leaning against the wall, the matches in his other hand, that hand resting on his hip.

The streetlight coming through the window fell almost full on him. His face could have been common, but Evon saw the look in his eyes as he stood staring out at the street. The look was intense and sad together, and his lips were pursed in a tight, not-happy little smile, as if he wanted to say something but there was nothing to say.

His body could have been ordinary too, but in that light, and in that certain pose, it was classic. He stood at an angle from the bed, one leg before the other, the calves and thighs strong and full. In the light, the wiry cluster of bright red hair was clearly visible, and the firm buttocks, and the taut belly and the line of his muscular back. Then the broad chest, white and hairless, and the strong curves of his shoulders, and his head, posed that way to one side, his large eyes staring out into the cold.

Everything was still and Evon felt the hopelessness of the moment. The motionless body at the window put the room deeper in shadow by blocking the light. Gradually, one sound did emerge: the almost silent ticking of a clock. The clock was on the night table and had luminous hands, but Evon knew it was wrong and didn't care about time anyway.

Once, on an acid trip, Evon had tried to understand the measure of time, but saw it only in terms of movement; physi-

cal movement possibly, the movement of a life definitely. A second . . . a year . . . a moment . . . a kiss . . . a day . . . an emotion . . . a night . . . a dream.

The red-haired boy put a cigarette in his mouth and turned toward the bed. He stopped to light the cigarette, then stretched out above the blankets on his stomach. Evon looked at the fine curve of his back and behind and felt like touching him, but he didn't. He was trying to remember and understand. For a moment he swore he could hear the other's heart beating. Their faces were not far apart; Evon's eyes half-closed, hazy; the other's wide, staring. Evon thought to himself: he doesn't feel how cold it is.

Eventually, the red-haired boy climbed under the covers and buried his head in his folded arms and seemed to sleep, but he could not sleep.

Some noises were coming from the street, but they were vague, far away. The Irish boy's breathing was sometimes steady, sometimes unsteady. Evon lay very still, his head resting on a thick pillow. He looked around the room. A phone was on the floor in one corner, still connected but it didn't work. In another corner was a pile of clothes, none of them his. He was able to distinguish the different colors of the clothes and realized it was getting lighter in the room.

There was a movement and he turned to look into the other's eyes.

"Maybe you should think about, you know, moving on soon," the red-haired boy said. Evon turned his head away a

moment, his mouth in a slight, broken smile. Loud noise was starting to come up from the street. It didn't matter about understanding, so he ran both his hands all along the other's body.

* * *

In the Dorchester Avenue coffee house, five young men sat around a table. One of them was a new boy, a fifteen-year-old who had recently come from Lachine. He had thirty-five dollars in his pocket and was very pleased with himself. Across the room, seated alone, was Evon. He pretended not to hear the half-whispered conversation of the others, but he heard most of it.

"Why doesn't he join us? What's the matter?"

"He's only in bad spirits. He'll be all right."

"The other day he said to me, 'I have two years more,' just like that, as if he could put a time limit on himself."

"Drugs?"

"No, not drugs, not with Evon."

"What then?"

"Ah, the whole thing, loneliness, something, I don't know."

The fifteen-year-old, impatient, pushed hair out of his eyes and spoke up. "What's wrong with this friend of yours, anyway? I heard you say he makes good money."

The oldest of the group looked at him and laughed. "Well, our goddess doesn't see the point," he said, in a voice that everyone would hear. "Her majesty only knows the first step on the stairway down.

Money."

* * *

In his sleep, Evon saw the ocean, its horizon disappearing into the sky, its width endless. In the flashes of sunlight, three figures appeared and disappeared. He reached out to touch them but they came no nearer. He felt the waves pushing against him, pushing him back and back.

The hotel room was absolutely silent. He sat up in bed and looked at the burly man who slept soundlessly. Sitting on the side of the bed, he found the man's wallet and took twenty dollars out. Then he dressed and left the room.

He knew the big hotel well and took the elevator to the men's recreation floor. There a tired clerk gave him a key to a locker.

After undressing, Evon went to the steamroom, dropped the towel from around his waist and opened the thick sliding glass door. A lone figure sitting in one corner was barely visible, a vague shadow in the hot, white steam. Evon closed the door behind him and sat in the opposite corner.

A hissing from fresh clouds of steam was the only sound, and Evon relaxed, letting the heat sink into his legs and arms and back, easing away all the tightness. Then he looked at the person opposite him.

He was a young man, sitting with his legs up in front of him, so that his head nearly rested on his knees. His black eyes seemed to shine through the steamy

mist. "Hello, my friend," he said.

Evon leaned forward to see the other's face. He recognized the shining eyes. "Elliot," he said, "how are you?"

Elliot stood up, stretching his long, lean body. His straight black hair hung halfway down his back. Without hesitating, he sat close to Evon, running his hands along his already moist body. "I'm all right," he said, "and I'm full of good stories to tell. It's good to see you again." His face, deep and dark like an Indian's, was inches from Evon's in the heat and steam. Evon looked down. Moments passed in silence, and Elliot took his hands from Evon and applied them gently to a very large, very dark bruise on his right side. Evon noticed. "How did it happen?" he asked.

"Ahh, I got a crazy one tonight."

More long moments passed. Evon felt tired, and he wondered where he could sleep alone, without traveling too far. He looked again at Elliot. "So tell me some of your good stories."

The tall boy sat up straight and smiled. Evon knew him as a simple youth who liked to talk and to tell stories. "I went home for Christmas," he said.

"To New Brunswick?"

"Yes, all the way, by train and bus, and it was good to see my family again."

Evon felt a hollow, uncomfortable feeling. But he was curious. "Tell me about it, what was it like? Were you nervous?"

Elliot folded his legs under him on the bench. His fingers played with his toes. "Ah, well," he said, looking down, "on the train I slept all the way, and I

suppose it was on the bus I started thinking of them; my mother mostly, and my sister, my younger brother, and my father. I hoped my mother would not scold me for never writing. But when the bus left me off at the town, I had a different feeling.

"It's a small town, and there was just a new snow. Everything was quiet as I walked down the street; no one was outdoors. Then I heard dogs barking back and forth, and I couldn't tell which direction the barking came from. Then the dogs were quiet." He paused and laughed. "Oh, this sounds foolish," he said, looking at the other for some reaction.

"No," Evon said, looking back at the boy with amusement, "say what you were going to say."

Elliot smiled and went on. "Well, I kept walking, and then I heard a crow, and it reminded me of how I always heard crows early in the morning, on my way to school, and also in the evenings, all the years I was growing up. And then there was real silence . . . only the wind and the sound of my footsteps in the snow. It reminded me of other times. It made me feel very much at peace. I thought to myself, 'now you are really home.' "

Evon waited to hear more, but there was no more. He didn't understand the story. He closed his eyes and saw empty streets . . . bright yellow painted colors. A hiss of steam went up, and he breathed deeply. He was sweating freely now and his chest felt weighted, aching. "Tell me more about going home," he said, "nobody tells crazier stories than you."

"Well," Elliot said, "there was a boy."

"Ah," Evon said, smiling, "this part I can understand. Go on."

"He was a friend of my brother's from school. His name was Robert and he was staying over one night. He slept in the same room as me, and he talked about different things and seemed to like me.

"I watched him undress in the darkness. His silhouette by the window was beautiful, really beautiful, and I thought, 'Ah, how will I get to sleep tonight.'"

"But even after he got into his bed he kept talking. He was about sixteen and you could tell he thought a lot of me, living here in Montreal and being on my own. I don't know what happened, but suddenly I was sitting on the side of his bed, looking down on him. His eyes were big and seemed to shine up at me, and he stopped talking then. I could hear my father cough from his room down the hall. My heart was beating like a drum. My lips were kissing the boy's chest. Then his stomach. There was little hair, just sweet, soft skin. He lay very still, I didn't know if he was about to jump up or call out . . . yet his skin was hot. I pushed the blanket away then, and my eyes were closed, and I kissed, gently, gently, down and down. And he was very excited by it. I took him then, and in a moment I felt his fingers touching the hair on my neck.

"In a little while I was lying next to him, feeling good, and petting his pretty face with my hand. He touched me and whispered, 'Elliot, please don't tell your brother.' I said I wouldn't. Then he said,

'Elliot, now I want you to make love to me.'

"It was getting light in the room from dawn, and still we were awake. We'd made love all night, and he was as gentle as a fawn, and he'd look at me with these eyes that were so tender and sweet that I'd almost laugh out loud and I'd pull him close and kiss him. It was only when I heard some of my family getting up that I went back to my own bed, and we both managed to sleep awhile.

"In the afternoon he had to leave, and he knew I was leaving for Montreal that evening. My family barely said goodbye to him, they knew they'd see him again soon. But I knew I might never see him again. We said goodbye with our eyes only . . . he managed a great smile, and then he was gone."

Clouds of fresh vapor filled the room. Elliot shook his head and stood up. "Let's take a shower before we melt in here," he said. Then he paused by the sliding

glass door and looked at Evon who was still sitting, leaning into one corner, staring blankly at the floor. His body, glistening with a film of sweat, was like an unmatched and perfect bronze figure — classic, timeless and isolated. Elliot didn't know if Evon had listened to the story or not . . . he knew he talked too much. But he wanted to finish it. "You know," he said, "it sounds like a bad joke coming from a hustler, but it's the truth, it was like love. Even though it was only for a night, something good happened between me and him. And I'll always know that — that I knew something like love once."

Elliot was finished talking then. He pushed his damp heavy hair in back of him, and waited for his friend to get up before opening the sliding door that led to the shower room.

Evon got up slowly.

"Let's go down to Dorchester for some breakfast," he said.

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CONTRIBUTORS

DAN ALLEN teaches English at San Francisco City College and has written for many periodicals, including THE WHOLE EARTH CATALOGUE SUPPLEMENT.

RICHARD BENNETT lives in New York, retired.

AARON COHEN lives in New York City, not retired.

DANIEL CURZON is the author of the novel SOMETHING YOU DO IN THE DARK and a number of short stories. A new novel, THE MISADVENTURES OF TIM MCPICK, will be published soon.

DANIEL EVANS is an editor of THE PAINTED BRIDE QUARTERLY and has published in MOUTH OF THE DRAGON, AMERICA, WISCONSIN REVIEW, and is to be included in a new gay poetry anthology edited by Winston Leyland of GAY SUNSHINE.

BERNHARD FRANK teaches in Buffalo and has published in ANTIGONISH REVIEW and ENGLISH JOURNAL.

WILLIAM HARROLD teaches English in Wisconsin and has published in just about every poetry magazine around. He has also published a book on Browning.

KEVIN STEVENS is an artist in New York City.

LAURA LECHENGER teaches Rhetoric at the University of Iowa and is a graduate student in the Poetry Workshop. A chapbook of her poems has been published by Sitting Duck Books, P.O. Box 1224, Iowa City, IA, 52240.

DANIEL LUCKINBILL was an Artillery officer, with assignments in Oklahoma and Viet Nam. He now lives in a hotel in Venice, California. He has published in GAY SUNSHINE.

TOM McNAMARA is associate editor of GAY LITERATURE and writes for various underground journals. He lives in San Francisco.

ERIC NABOKOV lives in San Francisco, where he writes poetry.

DOUGLAS DEREK ROOME has published plays in a number of magazines and had others staged in several cities. He lives in San Mateo, California.

JERRY ROSCO is a copy editor in New York, a Canadian, and lives with Kevin Stevens, who did the drawings for this issue.

KENNETH ROSS lives in Boston and has published in the BOSTON GAY COMMUNITY NEWS. This is his first published poem.

W. I. SCOBIE lives in Santa Monica, California and has published in PARIS REVIEW, ENCOUNTER, and LONDON MAGAZINE. He is British.



Gay Pride Parade, San Francisco, 1975



Photo by Ruben of The Sentinel